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Goronwy Rees

Innocent Abroad

IT IS hard now, twenty-five years later, to explain even to myself the kind of attraction which Germany exerted on young men of my generation at Oxford. The image of Germany which we found so seductive has been irretrievably shattered by the events of the last twenty-five years; at the most a few scattered splinters are left, like the shards and fragments from which an archæologist tries to reconstruct a lost civilisation. To try and recover the original image of Weimar Germany by which I, and so many others, were attracted is like trying to restore some lost masterpiece which has been painted over by a succession of brutal and clumsy artists; and in this case the task is all the harder because the masterpiece never really existed and the Germany of Weimar in which we believed was really only a country of the imagination.

First of all, one would have to reconstruct the illusions under which we suffered at that time; the illusion, for instance, that in the war of 1914–18 there was no distinction of guilt between the Allies and the Central Powers, and that both sides were equally responsible for that appalling catastrophe; to which we added the emotional and irrational corollary that somehow or other the defeated were less responsible than the victors. In this illusion we were happily confirmed by reading Brandenberg, Lowes Dickenson, and Bernard Fay. It followed, for us, that the terms of the Versailles Treaty, which was then hardly older than the Potsdam agreement is now, were manifestly unjust, a pure assertion of the rights of the strong over the weak and of the victor over the vanquished; and for this reason it was clear that Germany deserved our sympathy and our understanding more than any other country, including our own. It must be remembered that we were very young men, who will always respond to ideas of this kind. The young dislike power, because they do not share it; the middle-aged adore it, because it gives them some assurance that the world will continue to be as they have known it.

We were all agreed, therefore, that the terms of the Treaty were unjust; it was equally obvious that they were futile. This illusion was firmly founded on Maynard Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Thus the Treaty was evidence not only of the brutality of the Allies, but of their stupidity. By contrast, Germany, still suffering under the injustices of the Treaty and without power to redress her wrongs, appeared as an innocent victim calculated to appeal to all our liberal and progressive instincts.

To those who said that, whether the Treaty was just or unjust, Germany might one day try to redress her defeat by force of arms, we replied scornfully that such fears ignored all the realities of the international situation; for we set great store by realities. For did not the League of Nations, supported by all the power of the Allies, exist to prevent the recurrence of war? We could not refrain from adding that even to question the power and intention of the League only threw further

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suspicion on the post-war policies of the Allies. But even if the League, as an instrument of Anglo-French capitalism, could not be trusted, was it not clear that there was an even stronger foundation for our belief in the maintenance of perpetual peace between nations? For the real bulwark of peace was not the League but the international working-class movement, and was not Germany, with its massive trade union and social democratic organisations, the strongest representative of that movement?

In saying this, of course, we were expressing our feelings just as much about our own country as about her defeated enemy. To sympathise with Germany was a mark of our violent revulsion against the Great War and its consequences, and against the generation which had helped to make it and to conduct it to victory. Germany was for us at the opposite extreme from everything we disliked in the land of our fathers; Germany, indeed, had done her best to kill our fathers, and we were not ungrateful to her for her efforts and sympathised with her failure, and to adhere to her cause and her culture was for many of us the most effective and the easiest protest we could make against the England of Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Lord Birkenhead, and Sir William Joynson-Hicks.

For politics were only a part of our infatuation with Germany. Weimar also represented to us all those experiments, in literature, in the theatre, in music, in education, and not least in sexual morals, which we would have liked to attempt in our own country but were so patently impossible in face of the massive and infuriating stupidity of the British middle classes. Was it not typical that our own *Beggar's Opera*, which as produced by Sir Nigel Playfair and Lovat Fraser was nothing more than a pretty and insipid *operetta*, should under German skies become the cynical and subversive farce of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*.

We received reports of these experiments, not only through the Press, through German films, through books, but by word of mouth. Ever since the inflation young Englishmen had visited Germany in greater and greater numbers, and they returned to us in Oxford with wonderful travellers' tales of this land of freedom and, even better, licence; where one could be on the right side, the proletarian side, in politics, and at the same time take advantage of the fact that social disapproval had ceased to exist; where morals had been discarded as a bourgeois prejudice; where sex was permitted, indeed encouraged, to take any form it chose, however eccentric; where night-club tables were decorated with phalli made of marzipan; where Mr. Issyvoo was having a perfectly delightful time living in a slum in the Hallesches Tor; what more could a young man need to satisfy his heart's desire?

II

IT MAY well seem to others, in the light of what happened later, that only a lunatic could have been quite so foolish as I was in those days; yet what I have written is by no means an exaggerated account of what I thought and felt about Germany at that time. I was very much a creature of fashion; I found the attraction of Germany irresistible; and so, in my first year at Oxford, I determined that in the summer vacation I too must make the pilgrimage to Weimar and to Wedding, see the whores and the queens and the Lesbians on the Kurfürstendamm, observe the violence and confusion of German politics at first hand, so that I might have at least some idea of what politics might be like if they were properly conducted; I too must tramp in the Black Forest with the *Wandervögel*, and breathe the inexpressibly sweet air of a society in decay. And indeed I succeeded in my objective of going to Germany; I should have felt terribly ashamed of myself if I hadn't; but somehow, as so often happened to me in those days, things turned out entirely differently from what I had intended.

Perhaps the reason was that I, unlike most of my friends, had no money for foreign travel; I used to wonder bitterly why I could not win scholarships to maintain myself in some *Nachtlokal* in Berlin instead of in the Wykehamist respectability of New College.

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How much more I should learn, I used to sigh. If I was to reach Germany in the summer I had to have a job, and so I answered an advertisement circulated by some student organisation for a tutor to teach a German boy who wished to learn English. The advertisement gave no name or address but simply invited applications and for a few weeks after I had replied I wondered happily what my destination would be if I were lucky enough to get the job. Would it be Berlin? I thought. Would I meet Mr. Issyvoo and savour the delights of Hallesches Tor? Or Hamburg, which was highly recommended by the more extreme hedonists among my friends? And whom would I live with? Social-Democrats? Communists? poets, musicians, sculptors, painters? It seemed to me at that time that the entire population of Germany consisted of left-wing politicians or artists of some kind.

The reply to my application put an end to all these speculations. I had indeed been successful; somehow I had never doubted it; for how else could I get to Germany that summer? But somehow my pupil's address had never figured in any of my day-dreams; there was something about it which even to me, infatuated though I was, looked somewhat barbarous and repellent: *Boguslavitz, bei Breslau, Schlesien.*

This was not at all what I had anticipated; and the name of my employer was equally disconcerting: Herr Baron Franz von Richthofen. It seemed to me impossible that out of the eighty million people in Germany I should have picked on a Silesian Baron to spend my long vacation with. The name itself had sinister overtones. I had associated war, for the Germans, with a desperate struggle against odds which in the end proved overwhelming, with defeat, disaster, starvation and revolution; and somehow this had made the Germans sympathetic. The name Richthofen had none of these associations; the only holder of it of whom I knew had indeed been killed, but he had been killed in his glory as the commander of the famous Richthofen flying circus. He had been a part of everything in Germany against which Weimar was a protest. He had been Germany's greatest flying ace, a Junker of the Junkers; there was nothing about him which was either pitiful or defeated; his name had the sound of something formidable, a *nasty* ring, almost, of heroism. I hardly dared say it to myself as I set out for Germany, but I had a horrid feeling within me that once again I was going to find myself, as so often before and after, *in the wrong set.*

III

THESE feelings did not become quite clear to me until I found myself in the train from Berlin to Breslau. Until then my preconceived picture of Germany had not been seriously damaged. Cologne especially, with its great clean glass-vaulted station, had delighted me; here was *Modernismus*, here was *Baukunst*, here was Social Democracy at work! I thought with contempt, mingled with pity, of poor dingy old Liverpool Street, from which I had set off to Harwich the day before. From Cologne to Berlin the train had been crowded, and from the carriage window I caught sight of new buildings, factories, offices, villas, in steel and glass and concrete; I had an impression of a universal coming-and-going, of large numbers of people catching and leaving trains on purposes which, I was sure, were connected with politics, art, or literature. After all, what else was Weimar for?

In Berlin, I only had time to cross to the *Ostbahnhof*; with a pang of the heart, I had to leave Wedding, Alexanderplatz, the Kurfürstendamm unvisited. It was like passing through Rome without seeing the Sistine Chapel. And as the train left the *Ostbahnhof* I became aware that a strange, almost sinister emptiness had descended upon it. There were no more comings and goings on urgent and exciting business; I sat alone in my compartment and when I walked up and down the corridor I saw that the other compartments were deserted also. And as the train rolled through the dusk, across a plain which seemed as sombre, monotonous, and featureless as the dusk itself, it suddenly seemed to

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me that I had still as far to go as when I had landed at The Hook that morning. I felt as if I had already crossed Germany once that day; could it be that there was another Germany to cross before I reached my journey's end? As darkness fell, I stared out of the carriage windows and on the bare platforms of deserted stations I saw strange incomprehensible names that seemed more Slav than German. I felt suddenly and acutely that if this were indeed still Germany, it had nothing to do with anything I had known or thought about Germany until now.

Journeys make us abnormally sensitive to impressions; landscapes acquire a significance which they do not usually have; we find hidden meanings everywhere. When night finally blotted out the views from the carriage window, it seemed to me that the train racing into the darkness had no reason to stop or even falter until it reached the shores of Asia. What occasion could there ever be to halt in that everlasting plain which repeated itself for mile after mile like a sad, meaningless refrain. I felt slightly frightened, perhaps because I was tired at the end of the long day; but also because, alone in my brightly lit compartment, I felt as if I were travelling through some immense solitude. I told myself that such feelings were absurd; after all, Breslau was not Kamchatka, and thousands of very ordinary travellers must take precisely that same route from Berlin to Breslau every day. It was only, I said, that I was rather cold, that I had been travelling for a long time, that I was tired; that, after all, I *was* a very long way from Oxford and even further from my home in Wales. It was no good; whatever I said I could not shake off my impression of a landscape that stretched around me for thousands of miles, flat, grey and mournful, of the darkness outside that was not the familiar comforting darkness of home but was foreign, alien, and somehow hostile. It even *smelled* different.

To restore my spirits I went to the restaurant car where I ate a large and heavy German dinner, and treated myself to a bottle of wine and drank too much German brandy. I said to myself that here I was, at eleven o'clock at night, in a Mitropa car, alone, in the middle of Europe; that if I wanted to I could go on as far as Warsaw, or even further, that there was no one who could prevent me from doing exactly what I liked, and that therefore I ought to be very happy; but I could not reassure myself, my melancholy only deepened. When I returned to my compartment I fell asleep, and when I awoke at Breslau I was still so dazed with sleep and drink that I hardly had sense enough to get out. When I did so, I stood for a few moments alone on the platform until a man in a peaked cap and a leather coat came up to me and said that the Herr Baron was waiting for me at the hotel and he was to take me to him.

He took my bags and led me to the car, an ancient open Adler, and drove me through the empty streets to the hotel. There, waiting for me, were Herr Baron and his son Fritz, who bowed and spoke to me in very broken English to which I replied in even more broken German, and they said that I must be very tired after my long journey, and that they hoped I would be very happy at Boguslavitz, and that Fritz had a horse for me to ride; I suddenly felt that these were very kind people, and they insisted on my drinking some coffee and a great deal of brandy. It seemed to me that they said they were hoping to shoot some wild cats on the way home, but I felt that this was too improbable to be true and that I must have misunderstood them.

I was really too tired to take in much of what they said or where I was. In that room, in that hotel, five years later, Heines, Gauleiter of Silesia, sprawled back in his chair and took pot-shots with his revolver at the portrait of the Führer hanging on the wall; but when I read about this in the newspapers I could remember nothing about the room or the hotel. I could only remember kind voices and the smell of cigars and brandy. When finally we went to the car I fell asleep immediately, and when I awoke we were driving slowly through a dark forest. The rough track in front of us was brilliantly lit by the Adler's headlamps. The

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Baron was standing in the front of the car beside the chauffeur, silhouetted against the light like a cardboard figure. He had a gun in his hand. As I watched, a large black cat leaped out of the forest across the track. The Baron raised his gun and fired down the track. The cat gave one convulsive jump and then seemed to disintegrate completely. I could not be quite sure whether I was awake or still dreaming, and in a moment I had fallen asleep again.

IV

WHEN I awoke the next morning I saw something I had never seen before in my life. It moved me as the first sight of the sea must move those who have never seen it before. I had slept in a plainly furnished room above the stables; it was probably meant for a groom or a stable-boy, and it was as bright and polished as a horse's harness. A wooden verandah ran round the stables at the level of my room, and I stepped out on to it through the french windows. As I stood there in my pyjamas, to north and south and east I could see nothing but mile after mile of golden corn that stretched away to the horizon as far as the eye could see; only in the very farthest south, hardly to be seen, there was a faint blue shadow of mountains.

At first sight, I could hardly credit the reality of this great golden ocean of corn that lapped me round on every side. It seemed so vast, boundless, drawing the eye on and on as if there was no limit at which it could stop. I suddenly remembered, and for the first time understood, a statement I had read somewhere; Germany has no frontiers. And later, when the first shock of surprise was over and I became accustomed to the presence of this single immense cornfield that filled the world to its farthest horizons, I began to feel for the landscape an emotion that seemed as vast and boundless as itself. When I stood on my verandah and looked out, like the captain of a ship from his bridge, I felt as if I were cradled and rocked on the great golden bosom of the corn, as if I floated in some element that would both cherish and feed me. And sometimes, as if in response, the surface of the corn would move, and the corn stalks gently incline their heads, as the clouds passing over cast a shifting shadow upon them; in the brazen heat a little breeze sprang up and rippled the heads of the corn for mile after mile until the impulse seemed to expend itself at last on some far off and invisible shore.

Fritz and I would get up every morning before dawn, while it was still cold and dark, and ride to the racecourse outside Breslau, five miles away. He had a powerful bay mare which he was preparing for the races at Halle later in the summer; I rode beside him on a little cossack pony that was convinced it could do everything, whether jump or gallop, at least as well as the mare could do. In the hour before dawn, the cornfields were dun-coloured and sighed softly as the dawn wind passed over them; and as we rode, and as his English and my German began to improve, Fritz and I discussed the matters which filled his head and his heart and which to me seemed strange beyond belief.

He was seventeen, with a lean sunburned horseman's face and thick blond hair that perpetually fell in a heavy lock across his cheek; and I was twenty and therefore looked down on him from the heights of an intellectual superiority which made me dismiss his ideas as childish imaginings. All the more so, because I quickly found that they were in all respects at variance with mine, and indeed seemed to reflect a world which bore no relation to any I had ever known.

Fritz thought a great deal about the Great War, but in a way which was quite alien to me, who shared the fashionable view among my contemporaries that the war had been a culpable aberration of our fathers, which had best be forgotten as soon as possible. For Fritz the war, or rather its result, was a personal affront, and he fought all its battles over again in his mind as if by thinking he could change Germany's defeat into victory. One day he puzzled me considerably by talking about Germany's naval victory at Skagerrak, and it took me a long time before I could identify this as the Battle of Jutland,

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which I (and I had assumed everyone else) knew to have been won by the Royal Navy. But when I tried to explain his error to him, as kindly as I could, I found to my distress that he knew so much about the battle, its strategy and tactics, the weight of guns employed, the details of ships sunk, that I was in no kind of position to refute him.

I found also that in discussion with Fritz it was difficult to preserve my feelings of sympathy with the defeated Germans. His attitude was quite simply that the Germans had not been defeated at all; they had won the war, but somehow the result had been wrongly recorded. He was like a boxer who knows that he knocked out his opponent in the third round but finds to his amazement and indignation that the verdict has been given against him on points. His conviction that the German army had won the war brought an added element of confusion into my ideas about Germany, which were already confused enough.

It is quite easy, and does not require any large degree of imagination, to sympathise with an enemy who has been totally defeated and disarmed. It is much less easy when the enemy regards himself as the rightful victor, who has been cheated of the spoils of his victory by some monstrous perversion of history. And it is even less easy when the enemy thinks, as Fritz did, that his first duty in life is to ensure that the error should be corrected at the first possible moment.

Fritz's passionate belief that, in the name of historical justice, there must be a radical revision of Germany's status in the world was all the more confusing because it was enriched by literary and romantic associations which at that time conveyed little or nothing to me. It was strange to find a boy, whom I found extremely likeable and attractive, in love with ideas which seemed to me harsh and repellent and, very often, ugly. At Oxford I had been brought up to admire Proust and James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey; we went in for a combination of cynicism in regard to the feelings of those who did not agree with us, and extreme sensitiveness in regard to our own. ***Only connect*** we said in Mr. Forster's famous words, but we were very careful and exclusive about whom we connected with. Now Fritz introduced me to writers whose names even, in some cases, were utterly strange to me and whose ideas were even stranger.

Some of these writers, like Nietzsche, of whom then I knew nothing, carried with them an air of faded 19th century romanticism; how was I to know that this was also the air of a world which was yet to come? And what was I to make of the great English writer, Houston Stewart Chamberlain? Fritz was profoundly shocked by my ignorance when I had to confess that I had never even heard of him, but forgave it as a typical example of British philistinism, and kindly gave me a copy of *Der Mythos des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* to read. And novel and disconcerting as these writers were, they were all the more so because, for Fritz, they spoke with a voice that was also the voice of Hölderlin, and Stefan George, and Rilke—and also of Moeller van den Bruck and Josef Göbbels. For me these writers, as I came to know them, seemed so disparate, both in content and in quality, that it was impossible to accept that they were part of a single literary tradition; the ideas of some of them, certainly, seemed to reach such a pitch of lunacy and brutality that it was impossible to take them seriously. But for Fritz they were all profoundly and equally serious; to him they all spoke a secret wisdom which provided him with an answer to life. And through him, indeed, I came to admire and love Hölderlin and Nietzsche, George and Rilke, but I could never understand how it was that to him they could mean such utterly different things from what they meant to me.

Fritz was a charming companion and friend, and I was puzzled that I should find him none the less so even though most of his ideas and beliefs were to me both fantastic and repellent. I solved this contradiction for myself by dismissing them as the imaginings of a half-educated schoolboy, and for this reason I never came to suspect that, in various forms, they were shared by thousands of young men and women all over Germany. It

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seemed to me that no one could seriously believe in such a farrago of nonsense, and what is more, such brutal and barbarous nonsense; coming from Oxford, I was firmly convinced that the irrational is the unreal. And so I did not take Fritz's ideas about politics and literature seriously; any more, for instance, than I took him seriously when he talked to me with rapture about his hero, the ex-Crown Prince Wilhelm, and more particularly about the beauty of his Hohenzollern profile, in which one could see, said Fritz, all the courage and virtue of his race.

Riding along beside him, on the dusty Silesian roads, I dismissed this as yet another of Fritz's absurd fantasies; and indeed it was no odder than many of the ideas which formed the staple of our conversation at Boguslavitz. When we reached home, the rest of the family would be having breakfast on the verandah which ran across the plain stone front of the house. On the table were bowls of boiled eggs, a crock of fresh butter, black bread, smoked ham, and innumerable varieties of cold sausage. The sun was already hot overhead, and the long grass of the overgrown lawn looked cool and green in the shade of the pine-trees surrounding the tennis court. The Baron was finishing his enormous breakfast and threw scraps of sausage to the dachshunds; under the admiring eyes of his two plump and sturdy daughters, and of his wife, who was small and gentle and came from the Rhineland and was half French, he discoursed eloquently and violently on the political events of the day.

V

THE Baron was *Reichstagsabgeordneter* for Lower Silesia. He was a devoted and conscientious member of the German Nationalist party, though he never ceased complaining because his parliamentary duties took him away to Berlin from the affairs of his estate. During the first few days of my stay at Boguslavitz I seized eagerly upon the opportunity of discussing German politics with him, but I soon came to realise that, however hard we tried to understand one another, we were divided by an abyss which no amount of effort could bridge, so profound indeed that the words of our discussions seemed to reverberate meaninglessly in its depths.

I had felt in honour bound to explain to the Baron, at the start of our acquaintance, that I was a socialist, and it was quite obviously completely incredible to the Baron that any Englishman could hold such political views. *Kommt nicht in Frage*, he would say curtly, and proceed with the discussion on his unshakeable assumption that, like himself, I was an old-fashioned country gentleman. It did not help when I explained that I was not an Englishman but a Welshman; that was all the same to the Baron. No one could have been more acutely sensitive to racial, and social differences, between his own countrymen, but the British Isles he regarded as inhabited by one single homogeneous race whose individual members were all, without exception, gentlemen, and being gentlemen could not possibly be socialists. It followed for the Baron that when I said I was a socialist either I could not be telling the truth or I did not know the meaning of the word. On the whole, I think, he favoured the latter solution, but in any case I soon realised that he regarded my political ideas in exactly the same light as I regarded Fritz's, that is to say, as childish fantasies which no one could possibly take seriously. This solved the matter very satisfactorily for the Baron, who was very fond of me, and having dismissed my politics as a form of infantile disease he proceeded to lavish upon me all the affection which he invariably showed to children and to animals.

His kindness indeed went so far that he tried to explain to me what kind of people socialists really were and why therefore I could not possibly be one. In the first place, they were all Jews, and there were no Jews in England, or at least English Jews were not really Jews at all; the only real Jews came from over there, he said, waving his hand vaguely in the direction of Poland and the Ukraine. Moreover, socialists were men who were ready at any moment to betray their country. Indeed, they had betrayed Germany,

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the German army, and the Kaiser. Further, their sexual habits were disgusting and obscene, they did not love God or their country, and they knew nothing about agriculture. And as his catalogue of sins continued, his bright little eyes would shine affectionately at me and he laid his hands upon my shoulder as if to say that I must now surely see how impossible it was for me to believe I was a socialist.

In the early days of my stay at Boguslavitz, I used to reply to this kind of appeal by reaffirming my socialist beliefs and by trying to expose the absurdity of the Baron's own views. In particular, I used to attack the Baron's own party, the *Deutschnationalen*, and its leader Hugenberg, the Beaverbrook of Germany, as the representatives of aggressive German capitalism and nationalism. But it had no effect; Fritz, the Baron and I were caught up in a kind of chain reaction of misunderstanding. The Baron regarded me as a child, and I regarded Fritz as a child, and both Fritz and I, in our different ways, regarded the Baron as a child, a kind of foundling left on our doorstep from an age which had entirely vanished. Our misunderstandings, indeed, were so comic that for the first time an element of scepticism began to creep into my dogmatic political outlook. I began to wonder whether perhaps all political conflicts were not based upon similar misunderstandings and a universal inability to take any point of view seriously except one's own. But comic as the situation was, it was also, in a sense, tragic. Because in misunderstanding Fritz and the Baron I was in fact misunderstanding all the ideas which later were to coalesce and provoke the most profoundly revolutionary movement of the 20th century.

In any case, it was futile for me to discuss politics with the Baron because he obstinately refused to accommodate himself to my preconceived political categories. When I denounced Hugenberg, the Baron heartily agreed with me and broke out into far more violent denunciations. For the Baron, I discovered, belonged to a fraction of the party which had followed Graf Westarp, "a good old man" said the Baron, when he had been driven out of the leadership by Hugenberg; and if my attacks on Hugenberg were violent in the sense that they abounded in the stereotyped terms of abuse which in those days the Left used against the Right, the Baron's were far more impressive and effective because expressed in good earthy obscenities, straight from the sty and the stall. Even so, they did not exhaust his indignation. They left him red-faced and furious, yet somehow still smiling, as if pleased because our common hatred of Hugenberg showed that in the end our ideas and feelings were the same. "We must put an end to all that" he said, pointing in the direction of Berlin, as if he and I together were entrusted with the historic task of cleaning out the Augean stables of German parliamentary democracy.

I was even more surprised by the Baron's reaction to my attacks on the senile President of the Reich, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. For after all, I thought, to whom could the Baron give his loyalty and admiration if not to the Field-Marshal and ex-Supreme Commander of the German armies which the Baron, like Fritz, believed to have never been defeated. The Baron totally ignored any reasons I had for criticising the Reichspresident, but he warmly welcomed any condemnation of him. "What a man!" he cried. "What a President! A traitor to his country! A Field-Marshal who broke his oath and drove out his Kaiser. What a difference from that poor Ludendorff! You don't have men like that in England." Tears came into his eyes at the thought of the Kaiser. He seized my hand and shook it warmly, and so once again, to my intense irritation, I found myself drawn into the Baron's political embrace. Indeed on this occasion he was so moved that before the loving eyes of his family he flung his arms around me and from that day on had no shadow of doubt but that we were the firmest of political allies.

VI

BECAUSE of this, but also because the Baron was a man of warm and impulsive affections, he insisted thenceforth on making me share all his pursuits and

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pleasures. Most of Fritz's time was taken up with his horses; his thin figure, in very elegant white breeches and black riding-boots, was always to be seen in the stables, where he spent hours with his groom endlessly discussing his chances of winning in the races at Halle. At first he had tried to involve me in these discussions; but the groom was a wizened little old Englishman from Swindon, who in spite of forty years spent in Germany promptly recognised me for what I was, a would-be intellectual from Oxford, and refused to speak a word about such mysteries in my presence. As for my duties as a tutor, one hour's English lesson a day on the verandah after breakfast seemed to be all that was expected of me; for the rest of the time I was at the Baron's disposal.

Boguslavitz was one of the largest estates in Silesia; it was also one of the most modern and the most highly mechanised, for however reactionary his political views, the Baron's farming methods were extremely advanced. Each day the Baron inspected some part of his estate, or one of his enterprises, taking me with him. With a patience, an absorbing interest, a quite inexhaustible and insatiable curiosity, which sometimes wearied me to the point of exhaustion, he examined crops, farms, machinery, houses, schools, accounts, woodlands, new-born babies, newly married wives, horses, pigs, granaries and, most frequently of all, his estate railway that carried his crops down to the junction on the boundary of the estate. We talked to managers, bailiffs, tenants, labourers, engineers, tractor men, gamekeepers, carpenters, schoolmasters, children, and to each as if our lives depended on obtaining the last and minutest detail of their activities. But when at last the end of the day came, and the heat of the sun began to die, and as it seemed to me we had inspected every particular ear of corn on all the Baron's thousands of acres, a happy smile would come across his face, he would take my arm and lead me to the decrepit Adler, and we would drive at an appalling speed to one of his forests to shoot deer.

In the cool of the evening, with the same endless patience and cunning which he showed in administering his estates, the Baron stalked the deer for hours, and I clumsily tried to follow his movements. And once again the Baron should have been disappointed in me, or at least should have begun to revise his idea of the British people as a race composed exclusively of sporting gentlemen. For I am, and always have been, violently gun-shy and have a profound repugnance to shooting anything, even human beings. But after my first stalk with the Baron, I realised there was no need for me to be nervous. After hours of patient pursuit, while the forest green grew darker and darker, and in the cool damp undergrowth each fern and leaf seemed to have its own sweet particular scent, the Baron at last had the stag's head between his sights, for a moment they stared at each other across them, and then the Baron lowered his rifle and, his eyes misty, muttered apologetically: *Die sind aber so schön*. Then we walked together through the forest to his forester's little hut where he and I and the forester drank beer in great quantities, and he and the forester, who had been his batman during the war, talked of Langemarck and Verdun, and with great gusto and pleasure of their bloodthirsty experiences as *Ostkämpfer* in the Balticum after the war and in the Polish insurrection in Upper Silesia in 1921. And it was there in the hut that I first heard the names, until then unknown to me, of Maercker, and Schlageter, and Salomon, of Erhardt, *der Kapitän*, and Kern and Fischer and von Pfeffer, who to the Baron were heroes, saints, and martyrs, though in fact they were the most depraved, because the most idealistic, of assassins and murderers.

In such strange pursuits I spent most of my time at Boguslavitz. They were only interrupted when the Baron had to leave for Berlin to attend the Reichstag, and from these visits he would return in a fury of rage and disgust with all politicians. In his absence I rode with Fritz, I played tennis with his sisters, we paid visits to the Reichswehr garrison in Breslau, where Prittuitzes and Nostitzes, Schwerins and Moltkes and Haases flirted in an extraordinarily stiff and old-

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fashioned way with the Richthofen girls, and where one night Fritz and I became outrageously drunk under the portrait of Frederick the Great which hung on the wall of their mess.

And now the end of my visit began to approach. Fritz's training schedule was almost complete, and soon the entire family were to move to Halle in order to watch him ride his race. The Baron, however, was very anxious that, during their absence, I should spend a few weeks with a friend of theirs who had a large estate on the Baltic and who, he said, would be delighted to have me to stay and tutor his grandchildren. This was an East Prussian gentleman named Oldenburg-Januschau and I had what I thought at the time the extreme good sense to refuse. For one thing, even the name of Oldenburg-Januschau frightened me; and moreover, if the Baron and his family could quite reasonably be regarded as somewhat conservative in their outlook and habits, even by their own description it seemed as if Herr von Oldenburg-Januschau's way of life had as yet hardly advanced as far as the feudal stage of civilisation. But I had already begun to feel that from any serious point of view I had completely wasted my time in Germany. I had seen none of all the many things I wanted to see; of all the progressive, revolutionary, subversive movements I had hoped to study I had found not a trace; for all I had learned of Marxism and Social Democracy in action I might just as well have been at the court of the Great Elector as at Boguslavitz. I felt that to visit Herr Oldenburg-Januschau on the Cimmerian shores of East Prussia, among his lakes and forests, his wolves and bears and wild cats, would take me even further than I was already from the realities of modern Germany; and after all, what had I come to Germany for, except to study reality?

So I refused the invitation which the Baron extended to me on his friend's behalf, even though I could hardly resist the simplicity and sincerity of his assurance: "Oldenburg-Januschau is a real Prussian. There aren't many like him left. You would like him." I told the Baron that it was really time for me to return home and devote myself to my vacation reading, of Bradley and G. E. Moore, of Hume, Locke, and Berkeley, whose ideas seemed somehow strangely thin and insubstantial in the great corn-laden immensities of the Silesian plain. It seemed to me then that, for once, I had made a serious and responsible decision; but like all the serious and responsible decisions I ever came to in my youth, I greatly regret it. If I had gone to Herr Oldenburg-Januschau's I might have made a little further progress in my peculiar and unwilling initiation into German life and politics. Indeed, if I had eyes to see, which seems improbable, I might have learned a great deal about some of the most practical realities of German political life. For Herr Oldenburg-Januschau had some very business-like views about the duties which the state owes to its patrons. He was a great friend of Oskar von Hindenburg, the President's son, and together they had promoted the purchase of the estate which had been presented to the President by his admirers. And I suppose it was at just about the time of my proposed visit to him, that he was engaged in the wholesale plundering of the *Osthilfe* funds which he regarded as a reasonable *quid pro quo*, which helped to destroy the government of Herr Brüning, and thus to inaugurate the triumph of the National Socialists. Today I would give much to know what kind of conversation went on in Herr Oldenburg-Januschau's house that summer.

My refusal of his suggestion depressed the Baron; he had hoped that after visiting Herr Oldenburg-Januschau I would rejoin them at Boguslavitz. He seemed genuinely upset at the idea that I must leave, but he recovered his spirits when he came to the conclusion that, since I would not change my mind, some very special farewell party must be arranged for me. For a few days he was unable to decide what form it should take; his sunburned forehead, above the straight fine Prussian nose, was furrowed with his effort to devise something that would really be good enough for me. Then one morning he

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cried out happily: "We'll go to see Felix!", and I could see from the faces of the family that at last the Baron had found the perfect solution to his problem. "*Grossartig!*" cried Fritz; the others smiled with delight at the mere idea of the pleasure the Baron was going to procure for me.

Felix it appeared was the Baron's cousin, Graf Felix Schwerin, who owned an estate some distance away from Boguslavitz. He was, the Baron assured me, a perfectly delightful person, though recently he had become somewhat of a recluse because of the disasters and evils which had come upon Germany as the result of her defeat. He had handed over the management of his estate to a bailiff, and lived alone as an *Einsiedler*, or pioneer, in a cabin he had built for himself in one of his own forests, where he devoted himself to ornithology and botany and only at rare intervals encountered any of his fellow-men. But in the depths of his retirement he retained one distinction which seemed to me quite fabulously improbable; he held the European record for duck-shooting. And in spite of having abjured a world in which a German Kaiser had been forced to abdicate, it appeared that Graf Felix still occasionally welcomed a visit from relatives and friends. "He will like to see you," the Baron said confidently, as if his description of his own cousin showed quite clearly how much we had in common.

Sofort anrufen! shouted the Baron to Fritz. He was so struck by the brilliance of his idea that he was in a fever to leave at once. It was typical of him that he should have chosen this expedition as his last particular parting gift to me. Though he knew how incompetent I was with a gun, how badly I rode, he could not disabuse himself of the idea that somewhere inside me was concealed an English country gentleman, who spent his days in hunting, shooting, and fishing and in the evenings retired to his library to drink port and read Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

But the Baron had to restrain his impatience. It appeared that Graf Felix, in his wilderness, was engaged in writing a philosophical treatise on the psyche of flowers, birds, and plants, and that his train of thought was so absorbing at the moment that it could not be interrupted; he would welcome a visit, in particular because of *the Englishman*, but he would not be free to receive us until the very day before I was due to leave for England. This information, reported by Fritz after a telephone conversation with Graf Felix, provoked a flood of speculation among the ladies of Boguslavitz; they could not quite believe that it was philosophy which was occupying him in the depths of his forest. "If only he would marry" they sighed; "he is so handsome." But the Baron swept all this aside as womanly chatter. It seemed to him quite natural that the holder of the European record for duck-shooting should be preoccupied with philosophy, and he ordained that we should leave Boguslavitz on the appointed day, taking my luggage with us, and that after visiting Felix we should drive direct to the station at Breslau in time to catch my train.

VII

SO EARLY one morning the Baron, Fritz and I set out in the Adler and drove wildly and dangerously to Graf Felix's estate about a hundred miles away. The Baron and Fritz stood up as we drove, their guns at the ready to annihilate any cats that crossed our path. I forget what our bag was that day, but they shot several. I was fascinated by the way in which the animals seemed to disintegrate completely on the impact of the shot. At one moment the dark sleek body of the cat filled a given area of space; at the next, there was nothing there. But these isolated acts of slaughter were as nothing compared with the holocaust of game that took place on our arrival. Graf Felix had so far transcended his misanthropy, and surmounted his philosophical difficulties, that he had invited a few other friends to join us. They seemed to have driven immense distances in order to enjoy the privilege and the pleasure of meeting Graf Felix, but once having arrived they seemed intent on blazing

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away with their guns until every form of animal life in Silesia had been destroyed.

The sound of their guns deafened and confused me. I have a memory now only of a group of tall, slender men, long-headed, long-nosed, who all seemed to be of the same physical type, dressed in belted jackets with fur collars and in heavy boots, which seemed somehow to emphasise the military air with which they carried themselves. They moved stiffly, like soldiers. They spoke in hard, clipped Prussian accents, and their very sentences seemed to aim at the same ideal of style as Stendhal's, a style that should be *soldatesque*. Their long, narrow heads, with the prominent bones, suggested some fine animal which is both finely bred and savage and for once I almost began to understand Fritz's extravagant rhapsodies about what he called "the Hohenzollern type." They were immensely polite to me and I had the distinct sensation that on the slightest provocation they would have cut my throat or shot me in the back.

I remember also how damp and quiet it was in the forest and on the fringe of the marshes in the evening, and again in the dawn, with the cold mist circling round our ankles and in the east the first flush of dawn beginning to climb into the sky. Waiting there, among the reeds on the edge of the marsh, for the guns to fire and momentarily destroy the silence until it as suddenly returned again, I watched the slender figures of my companions and had an acute melancholy sense of the vast monotonous distances surrounding us and the huge sky which overreached us. I say melancholy, not only because of the mysterious silence of the forest, the cold, bleak breeze that blew across the marsh, but because I and my companions seemed pitifully small and impotent amid their immensities. I felt as if I were in the company of the disinherited, of men who had lost everything and would waste their own lives and the lives of a million others in the attempt to recover what had never really belonged to them.

In part this feeling may have been an effect of the conversation in Graf Felix's cabin the previous night. When night had fallen, we had eaten a vast cold supper washed down with wine and beer and schnapps; I received the impression that Graf Felix's solitude was not quite as complete as it seemed. His cabin was built of logs, on a pattern familiar to Germans from the novels of Karl May; it had one long room which served as sitting-room and dining-room, a study filled with his specimens and books, and two small bedrooms. After supper we sat in his study and drank huge quantities of brandy and schnapps. The room filled with cigar smoke. I was tired after the long day in the open air, drowsy with food and drink, indeed I suppose half tipsy. I sank into a kind of torpor in which I was only half conscious of the conversation that went on around me until late into the night, indeed until it was almost dawn, and time to take to the fields and the forest once again.

I heard the Baron repeat his denunciations of the politicians in Berlin, and his familiar refrain: *we must put an end to all that.* I heard Graf Felix, melancholy and yet passionate, deliver a long soliloquy, which I only half understood, on the necessity for Germany to return to a more simple and primitive way of life, to live as the plants and animals do, by nature and by instinct, which apparently implied that the working classes should recognise a hierarchical order and a principle of authority in the organisation of society. Apparently, also, the secret and mysterious life of nature, to which Germany should revert, required a periodical blood-letting in the state.

Such thoughts were too deep for me, especially because, for the others, who enthusiastically agreed with them, they seemed to lead to extremely practical conclusions; as for instance, that the salvation of Germany was dependent upon a thorough liquidation of all the existing political parties and a restoration of the Prussian virtues of probity, self-sacrifice, and military efficiency. The programme they proclaimed seemed to me both confused and impractical; certainly it never occurred to me that one day it would be put into practice, though with a brutality

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which I am sure my companions of that evening would have found distasteful.

As the evening wore on, politics gave way to reminiscences, of the war, of the *Stosstrupps* and the Argonne, of the *Freikorps* and the Balticum, episodes in history that had played no part in our Oxford studies of the war and its aftermath; but to these men they represented some ideal of soldierly violence which had been betrayed and degraded by Weimar. And from this they went on to telling soldiers' stories and singing soldiers' songs, tears in their eyes as they recalled one act of violence after another; until in my eyes, tired and confused as I was, they began to take on the air of drunken conspirators, plotting some revenge of unimaginable savagery which would satisfy all their feelings of hatred, bitterness, and humiliation. But by now their faces seemed so blurred and vague, their voices so distant, the cigar smoke hung so heavily in the cramped book-lined little room, the words they uttered seemed so improbably sinister, that I felt as if I had entered a world of fantasy and dream, that nothing I heard that evening could possibly have any relevance to the world to which I would wake in the morning. I seemed to be in one of those nightmares which never reach the ultimate revelation of evil because even as one horror opens on to another one can still say to oneself reassuringly: "It's all right; it's only a dream."

And indeed when I awoke in the morning, and as we walked the forest, and as we drove back to Breslau, I could not believe that my memories of the previous night were anything but the products of an over-excited imagination, that the improbable scraps of conversation which recurred to me, the sudden glimpse of a violent gesture seen through a haze of cigar smoke, had any basis in fact. I must have been drunk, I thought, I must have fallen asleep, I must have been dreaming; they could not really have said such things. So that when at last, on Breslau station, the Baron finally embraced me with tears in his eyes and I boarded the train for Berlin, my most vivid memory of my visit to Silesia was of something which, as it seemed to me, had never really happened at all.

VIII

How could I have known that I would never see any of them again? that their dreams of revenge would be realised in a form that exceeded their most violent imaginings, and that in the realisation they would suffer even worse humiliations than those on which they brooded so intensely? In today's paper I read that the large estates in Silesia, having been broken up after the war, then communised, are now being broken up again, because the peasants are refusing to work the land; it gives me a shock to think that one of these estates is Boguslavitz, and I wonder what has happened to the Baron's estate railway, of which he was so proud, and whether the corn still stretches away as far as the eye can see. In the same way it gives me a shock to look beside me at the photograph of the Baron which I still possess, at the short straight nose and high cheekbones and the firm and smiling mouth under the little grey moustache; and I wonder at precisely what moment, and under what circumstances, he and his family succumbed to the disaster which overcame them. I only know that under the National Socialists, the Baron, still clinging to the principles of that "good old gentleman" Graf Westarp, was confined to his estate; but though he survived the displeasure of the National Socialists, he did not survive their defeat. And I wonder if he was fortunate enough to die or be killed, or whether in some Asiatic prison-camp he still lives to discourse on the virtues of being a Prussian.

I never went back to Boguslavitz. And when I returned to Oxford in the autumn for the Michaelmas term I did not boast about my experiences in Germany. My friends who also returned from Germany after the vacation came back with far more interesting stories. They had been to the Rhineland and to Munich and to Hamburg

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and Berlin and Bayreuth; they had been to the theatre, had met artists and writers, had had love affairs and attended political demonstrations; and all they had seen and done had given them an even greater enthusiasm for the progress of social democracy and for the free air and freer culture of Germany. Who could doubt, on such evidence, that Germany was approaching a crisis in her affairs that would gloriously inaugurate the revolution? All this seems difficult to believe now. To us it seemed obvious; and under such conditions what possible importance or significance could I or anyone else attach to Boguslavitz, or to the Richthofens, who seemed in retrospect both dull and slightly absurd? How could anyone believe that those ridiculous political fantasies, compounded of Nietzsche and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, were to have far more effect on the future of Germany than the complicated and refined theoretical structure elaborated by Marxists and Socialists?

I certainly did not believe it; I gladly and passionately believed the opposite. Like many others whose education had been almost exclusively literary, I had a wonderful faculty for ignoring what lay under my nose and clinging to purely verbal constructions for which I possessed no empirical evidence whatever. I lived in a glorious state of euphoria in which facts were only valuable when they proved what one wanted to believe. It never occurred to me that at Boguslavitz, in the Baron and in Fritz, in Graf Felix and his friends, I had been introduced to a type of political thinking which was going to determine my own life as well as theirs, that the conspiracy which had seemed so dreamlike and unreal in Graf Felix's log cabin was in fact a real conspiracy which had its roots throughout Germany; that it was Weimar which was the dream. It was only later, when Weimar had been liquidated in shameful defeat and disaster, that I began to think again about my visit to Boguslavitz and wonder whether there I had not stumbled across a secret which might help to explain some of the events which followed Weimar's collapse.

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Patrick Gordon Walker

On Being a Cabinet Minister

Of Pounds and Pence

IT IS still true—perhaps truer than it has ever been—that a Cabinet Minister with private means finds his job a good deal easier to do. The means *must* be unearned. Earning is strictly forbidden, whether as a journalist, employee, or company director. Dividends alone are above suspicion—even should the shareholding constitute a controlling interest in a concern.

In the eyes of the state (which applies very different standards from business, private or public) a Minister has all his proper financial needs taken care of. He has a car and driver at his disposal. Since he lives so near the edge of physical exhaustion, and has to be in so many places at once, any reasonable comfort of transport is rightly assumed to be in the public interest. After a brief, brave show of economy, the Conservative government has quietly restored a Minister's right to a car. But this right is by no means unrestricted. Parliament and the Treasury together make a very fussy employer. If a Minister uses his official car to go to the theatre or to a political meeting, even if his official engagements have kept him till the last moment, the cost is recovered from him at so much a mile at the end of the month. It is one of the jobs of his secretary to make out a proper return.

It is also assumed—this time quite wrongly—that the public purse looks after all the entertainment that a Minister need engage in. Government hospitality arranges and pays for dinners and parties that he gives in his official capacity. And he is himself the subject of a great deal of entertainment. He has privileged access to splendid events and occasions in superbly appropriate settings. He meets the great ones of the world (amongst whom he is temporarily reckoned to figure) in palaces and great houses of state. He has also to attend innumerable cocktail parties and diplomatic functions and a series of practically identical annual dinners appropriate to his office — maybe of Commonwealth Clubs, Trade Associations, Local Authority Organisations, professional bodies, or City Companies. One of his problems is to frame an eating and drinking policy that is compatible both with courtesy and survival.

But there is one important segment of entertainment for which there is no provision—a quiet evening where one can talk over problems with one or more people of importance—perhaps even a visiting Commonwealth Minister. Government hospitality has certain minimum standards of lavishness: a meal must be on a scale appropriate to the dignity of the person entertained. Other Ministers, civil servants, members of the Opposition must all be asked. Moreover, Government hospitality is necessarily limited by its own rules. Only certain visiting personages qualify for official entertainment: and even these can only be entertained every so often according to their degree.

A Minister soon finds that his job demands that he must do some entertaining on his

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own that falls outside the scope or under the scale of Government hospitality. It is here in particular that the lack of private means becomes a painful matter. For a Minister is not allowed to claim *any* expense whatever against tax. He is treated by the tax authorities as a unique creature—he is the only person in the land who cannot even lodge a claim. No matter what rights in this respect have been established by apparently similarly situated people, the Minister is simply told that no claim whatever can even be considered. The official justification is that, despite all appearances, a Minister's proper needs are covered by the Treasury.

Since his salary is deemed to be solely in respect of his office, he is not even allowed to make the normal claims of an M.P. for certain constituency expenses, although all these expenses continue unchanged: a Minister must not use his office for the despatch of his parliamentary business. And out of his fully taxed income he must make running provision for next year's super-tax, when his salary may have suddenly dropped from £5,000 to £1,000, or even to nothing.

Thus a Minister has to mix on equal terms, but in unequal circumstances, with lots of people who are much better off than he is and most of whom use expense accounts as a matter of course. This applies equally to his encounters with most visiting Ministers from Commonwealth and foreign countries.

Of somewhat graver import is that the top civil servants whom the Minister must command will soon be getting up to £1,000 a year *more* than he does, quite apart from valuable pension rights. This may not amount to a great deal in terms of cash, after taxation; but, as is well known in business, a man's authority is subtly weakened when he has to give directions to men who are substantially better off than himself.

In practice, in the rush, anxiety, and honour of his occupation, all these financial considerations only occasionally enter a Minister's mind. After all, he is first and foremost an M.P. He will have got his training as a back-bencher and junior Minister and will be soaked in the ways of Parliament. Amongst other things, he will have grown accustomed to being the worst paid and provided Parliamentarian in the entire world.

Christian Names

A BRITISH Cabinet Minister can be pretty certain to find himself in charge of a Department of State he knows nothing about. He is the personification of the ambivalent British attitude towards experts—trust and respect them, but leave decisions to the layman. If a Minister has been a teacher, that is reason for *not* putting him at the Ministry of Education. It is also often considered a good ground for moving him to another Department that he has been three or four years in the same office—he may have become too much of an expert himself and therefore lost touch with the rough good-sense of the man in the street (or on the back-bench).

In his Department the Minister represents one side of that distinction between Minister and civil servant which is fundamental to the British concept of parliamentary democracy. There must never be any doubt that the civil servant advises and executes policy whilst the Minister makes it. One of his trickiest personal problems this provokes is how far he should translate this distinction into terms of his personal relations with his civil servants. Should he, for instance, get on to Christian-name basis with them?

When a Minister first goes to his Department he is always addressed by his official title—"Minister," "First Lord," "Secretary of State." But so close and friendly do Ministers become with their top officials, that many of them quickly slip into Christian names on both sides. I was perhaps too rigidly constitutional, but I always resisted the temptation. It was not easy: over and over again it seemed the most natural thing in the world to let a Christian name slip off the tongue. But the time might always come when one had to overrule the strongest advice, post an official where he did not want to go, pass someone over in promotion, or even consider his removal. And there was the general need to remember that a Minister and a permanent

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official are different sorts of constitutional creature.

I have found, since I have been in opposition again, that I naturally call by their Christian names men with whom I became very friendly in office but whom I then always called by their surnames.

The Hidden Hierarchy

THIS problem of Christian names in the Department is part of the curious system of hidden hierarchy in which a Cabinet Minister lives his official life.

In the first place, he is himself in the first eleven. The Cabinet is made up of some fifteen members out of a total of about thirty full Ministers. All these have equal legal status; they are all Ministers of the Crown, all collectively responsible for the actions of the Administration, all charged with the execution of some part of the royal prerogative. Indeed the Cabinet itself is unknown to the law—it has no rights, no corporate means of proclaiming or enforcing its decisions. Its powers are merely the sum total of those inherent in Ministers of the Crown or conferred upon them by Statute. Yet it makes a vast difference whether or not a Minister is a member of the Cabinet. As such he is, whatever the law may say, part of the effective sovereign authority of the United Kingdom.

Within the Cabinet, the equality of all members, one with another, is an important principle that has many practical applications: but here, too, there is something like the "pecking order" that is said to prevail amongst hens. In the antechamber outside the Cabinet room where Ministers gather before meeting, there is a row of coat-pegs. Under each peg is the name of a great office of state—Lord Chancellor, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, etc. Only Cabinet Ministers hang their hats and coats here—and only in the prescribed order.

When the time for the Cabinet meeting arrives, the Prime Minister himself opens the door from within, to the minute, and invites in his waiting colleagues. At this stage they are still merely personal friends and party colleagues. They smoke and exchange gossip and banter as they take up their set places round the large oblong table covered with green baize. The Prime Minister always sits in the middle of one long side of the table, his back to the fireplace and facing the large windows that give on the garden and the Horseguards Parade beyond. On his immediate left (at least in my day) is the Lord President and beyond him again the Chancellor: opposite sits the Foreign Secretary. Other members sit in an order arranged by the Secretary to the Cabinet. If the Chiefs of Staff are in attendance, they sit in uniform to the Prime Minister's right along the narrow side of the table, which is just large enough to accommodate the three of them not very comfortably.

Directly Ministers are seated, have opened their despatch boxes and arranged their papers, the Prime Minister calls them to order. In my day, smoking was prohibited till one o'clock and the signal for the formal opening of business was when the Prime Minister knocked out his pipe.

At once the whole atmosphere changes. Here is no longer a set of individual men, but the collective sovereign power of the state. During the meeting Ministers address all their remarks to the Prime Minister, as they do to the Speaker in the House. They refer to him and all their colleagues by their official designation. "Prime Minister, I can't go all the way with the Secretary of State for Scotland. . . ." "Before we leave this question, Prime Minister, may I make this point. . . ."

A great deal turns on the proper timing of an intervention. You can speak too early or too late in a discussion; too often or too little; and certainly too long. Cabinet discussion is highly skilled conversation. Underlying the quick and free exchange of equal opinions is a tacit respect for precedence. Certain Ministers by virtue of their office or seniority are accorded a right to longer speech.

Every Prime Minister, too, has a sort of "inner Cabinet" that is even less known to the law than the Cabinet itself: he may discuss informally with three or four close

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associates in high office tricky matters before they come up in Cabinet. They may concert their views on questions of such secrecy or confidence that the Cabinet willingly leaves them to the Prime Minister—perhaps concerning counter-espionage and security, the timing of a General Election, or possible Cabinet changes. In such matters the Prime Minister may consult whom he chooses or no one at all. The opinions of these close associates of the Prime Minister naturally carry added weight. The Minister who has departmental responsibility for the subject under discussion is also entitled, whatever his seniority or standing, to special respect for his views.

It is all too easy to give a false impression about the nature of Cabinet discussion. Despite the hidden hierarchy, all members are really equal: all are expected to express their views with the utmost frankness. The Prime Minister may change or dismiss his Ministers; but at any given moment the Cabinet is the master. No decision setting in motion the whole elaborate machinery of the state can be taken save by the Cabinet; and all Cabinet Ministers share equally in the making of these decisions. The youngest and most junior member can sometimes get his colleagues to change their minds.

Here again the word "decisions" may mislead. There are no resolutions or set propositions before the Cabinet; no voting system—just talk. Members discuss until a consensus of opinion is arrived at. When he thinks fit, the Prime Minister will sum up the views of his colleagues as they have emerged—a summary which may not altogether coincide with the opinions that he has himself expressed. Silence signifies assent—not necessarily precise agreement, but acceptance of the prevailing view. If contrary argument is still advanced, the discussion goes on again and may even be carried over to another Cabinet meeting. Occasionally a small group of Ministers may be invited to try and thrash out and settle some stubbornly unresolved point. But this sort of thing is extremely rare: it calls for great and persistent conviction to hold out against the impatient unanimity of colleagues eager to get on with the never-finished work of the Cabinet. On even rarer occasions—perhaps never at all in the life of a Government—the Prime Minister may "collect the voices": ask each member in turn to say "yes" or "no" and count up the result. This can occur on a matter about which opinions are equally divided but which is agreed to be of secondary importance; a vote may cut off time-consuming argument. Or on some tremendous issue, maybe involving threatened resignation. A Cabinet that has to resort to this sort of voting is in all likelihood near the end of its days.

The regular and hardly ever broken pattern is that, perhaps with some minor amendment, the Prime Minister's summary of the consensus of opinion is accepted and the Cabinet turns immediately to its next item of business. It is the job of the Secretary to the Cabinet to translate into "decisions" this never very precise consensus of opinion, by recording it in the Cabinet Minutes.

These Minutes are an essential part of the machinery of modern British government—the transmission belt that converts the views of the Cabinet into executive actions throughout the sprawling and world-wide apparatus of servants of the Queen, civil, diplomatic, and military. But they will prove a sad disappointment to historians when at long last they come to be published; for they do not set out a record of the proceedings in the usual way of minutes. Their purpose is to enable the will of the Cabinet to be instantly understood by the Departments concerned: they are in reality designed as instructions, not as a reflection of Cabinet proceedings, still less of any divisions of opinion. Once it has made up its mind the Cabinet is unanimous. The Secretary reduces the consensus of opinion to a number of tabulated "decisions"; only as much of the preceding discussion is set out as is necessary to elucidate and clarify these decisions—normally with exemplary brevity and hardly ever mentioning the names of those who took part in the discussion.

The Secretary is the servant of the Cabinet and any member may challenge the Minutes

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at the next meeting: but the work is done with such dutiful skill and in so practised a form that this scarcely ever occurs.

The Cabinet Network

THE Foreign Secretary's weekly verbal report on foreign affairs is the only relic of the primeval form of the Cabinet, when it not only included all Ministers, but these brought up issues without notice. This is still the rule in New Zealand. But in modern Britain, if all Ministers sat in the Cabinet it would turn it into a meeting instead of a conversation. The rush of affairs is so tumultuous that the fine machinery of the Cabinet is in constant danger of getting clogged up with a surfeit of business.

In relatively recent times a number of devices have been elaborated to keep the Cabinet's head above water; and these greatly affect the daily life of a Minister. The main development has been the paper-preparation of all Cabinet discussions. Cabinet papers, in which Ministers set forth their views, are continually circulated by a staff of confidential messengers who carry red boxes all over Whitehall. Some of these papers are for information—perhaps a report of a journey abroad or a statement of long-term policy. The great majority relate to matters that a Minister wants to bring before his colleagues. The means by which they are reduced to orderly and manageable proportions is the Cabinet Agenda. It sets out, with elaborate cross-references to papers that have been circulated and to previous Cabinet decisions, the business which fifteen or sixteen men can reasonably hope to despatch in three hours or so.

Ministers often jockey to get a good place on the Agenda, fairly close to the rails if possible; for Cabinets often do not get through a whole Agenda. Ministers (whether or not in the Cabinet) propose items to the Prime Minister, sometimes by personal representation. He alone decides the composition and order of the Agenda. Some matters, like parliamentary business or foreign affairs, are standing items.

Non-Cabinet Ministers are called to the Cabinet for questions that touch their departmental competence. This can be a testing ordeal. You are invited to attend at a stated hour when your business is expected to be reached—your appearance is nearly always premature; though occasionally, if the Cabinet goes unexpectedly fast, you may have to rush over from your office on a sudden summons. Usually you have to wait outside the Cabinet room, alone in the antechamber, which is the only place I know bleaker than a dentist's waiting-room. When the Secretary calls you in, you enter a Cabinet in full swing; find an empty chair where you can; hurriedly open your papers; and, at the Prime Minister's invitation, embark on an exposition of your case. When the point is settled, you rise and leave the Cabinet to get on with its remaining business.

Matters that do not at once get on the Agenda or which are not reached may just have to wait their turn till later. But Cabinet questions cannot be left like letters to answer themselves. The Cabinet has shown its extraordinary flexibility by evolving the so-called Cabinet Committees for the delegation of business. These Cabinet Committees are as secret as once was the Cabinet itself: they have no warrant in law: it is not even publicly known what Cabinet Committees exist nor which Ministers sit on them. Yet to these Committees is given the power of the Cabinet itself to set in motion the wheels of the State.

Committees of the Cabinet may be set up and disbanded in an instant as occasion demands. It is not unknown for the full Cabinet to charge a few of its members to deal with some difficult problem that may require minute-by-minute decisions. But the relentless demands of modern society have imposed a certain fixity of pattern upon this easy and fluid capacity of the Cabinet to propagate by splitting. A Defence Committee, an Atomic Energy Committee, a Home Economic Committee, a Future Legislation Committee—these have practically become parts of the constitution.

These Committees, which are nominated by the Prime Minister, consist of a few members of the Cabinet together with all the

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Ministers, whether or not in the Cabinet, who are departmentally concerned with their subject-matter. The Prime Minister himself may be chairman of some of them, the Lord President or Chancellor of others.

Cabinet Committees are an exact replica of the Cabinet. Each has its secretariat, agenda, and minutes; papers circulate beforehand; other Ministers are invited to attend as required. There is no very precise line of demarcation between the business that goes to these Committees or direct to the Cabinet: it is settled by the Prime Minister and the chairmen. The Committees have concurrent and equal jurisdiction with the Cabinet. A matter of very high import may occasionally come first before a Committee and then the Cabinet. If a Committee cannot agree on some matter it goes for final settlement to the full Cabinet. Otherwise the "decisions" of Cabinet Committees as recorded in their minutes are carried forthwith into effect with the full authority of the state.

This interconnecting and somewhat overlapping network formed by the Cabinet and its Committees largely dominates a Cabinet Minister's life. There seems to be one or another of these meetings at almost every hour of the day; and, by their nature, they consume time: if one is to have government by talk, there must be adequate time to talk things out.

In my day, Cabinets met twice a week in the morning from ten o'clock to one o'clock. Sometimes an extra Cabinet would be called, when engagement calendars had to be cleared at however short notice of any other encumbrance. Cabinet Committees usually met at fixed times every week, often after Parliamentary Questions—about 4 p.m. They, too, would sometimes hold extra meetings, for which time might have to be found, say at nine o'clock in the evening after dinner. Then there might well be special *ad hoc* committees that would meet weekly for a month or two. One way and another, a Cabinet Minister would be lucky to have less than half-a-dozen such meetings to fit into his weekly programme.

This incessant press of meetings has an important but little remarked effect upon the nature of modern government. *It sets a strict upper limit upon the extent of democratic planning.*

Planning presupposes the careful coordination of policy between those men who have the powers to carry the plan into effect. There can only be a relatively few such men, or administrative confusion will result. But coordination of policy consumes much of the time and energy of these few men. Every hour spent in meetings must be subtracted from the exiguous ration of hours that a Minister has left for the task of direct administration. Beyond a certain point—the more you plan, the less you do.

Ministers conceive a deep distaste for embarking upon projects that will entail more and longer meetings with their colleagues. This means that even Socialist Ministers are selective about the sectors of the national life that they can attempt to plan. They are the first to realise that in a democracy you cannot plan everything; nor, for that matter, with efficiency, under any system however totalitarian.

Even in matters that require planning, Ministers develop a strong inclination to find methods of administration that will leave them free to concentrate on the really decisive tasks. It is no accident that bodies like the Arts Council or the University Grants Committee have been evolved in the age of planning for the independent administration of public funds for social purposes. There is not the least danger of overburdened Ministers being tempted to follow up financial aid by state intervention in these fields.

In the Minister's Office

IN SOME ways a Minister's Department is his refuge. Here he is master in his own house. He is given every aid by his officials and armed with the best arguments for his own policies, whether for use in Parliament or Cabinet.

He is wonderfully served by his private office, which is the link between him and all spheres of his public and even his private life. His Principal Private Secretary, a

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promising young member of the Department, is his main prop, aided by one or two assistant secretaries and a staff of typists. The Private Secretary keeps a free flow of state papers, arranged in the most intelligible form, moving across the Minister's desk; sees that officials in the Department are instantly available at the right moment; keeps time free for necessary appointments, often rationed out in five- or ten-minute periods; constantly rearranges engagements; finds people at the other end of the country; makes elaborate arrangements for travel without bothering the boss; compiles his box or boxes of papers to take home at night; and does a hundred other things, including the sustenance of Ministerial morale.

The Department may be a refuge; but it is no place of rest. The Minister has his hardest decisions to make in his office because he is on his own. However able the advice he receives, the decisions are his; it is he and not his officials who are shot if they are wrong. The better the civil servants, the more will they put up problems to the Minister in the form of arguments pro and con; it is amazing how often these seem exactly in balance, with the direst consequence liable to flow from any decision. He must decide whether to settle matters on his own authority or to trouble his Cabinet colleagues with them. He must as far as possible compose his own Cabinet papers—alas, a task that is getting more and more beyond the compass of his time.

Somehow the Minister must manage to deal with the immense mail that reaches him, in some Departments in great sacks. It will have to be sorted for him and much of it answered in standard form. A good Private Secretary will bring the right letters to his personal attention, including any letter from an M.P., and frame suitable replies out of the briefest and most cryptic comments, scribbled perhaps in the middle of the night.

A Minister's relations with the press present one of his most difficult problems. In the House of Commons he will often get into usually rather casual conversation with Lobby correspondents, many of whom will be personal friends of long standing though they may have to criticise him severely in the course of duty. They have the highest standards of discretion, but a Minister must watch his words. His head is packed with information from all sorts of sources and it is not easy to remember which are communicable. Lobby correspondents, too, are adept at putting together into a coherent story stray words dropped by different people.

Outside the House other correspondents will seek him out. Some may be dangerous to see because their disclosures of secret information are so incessant that as likely as not something concerning your own Department may come out, and then everyone will think it was you who imparted the information. You must be careful about discrimination between newspaper men and it may be best to hold an occasional press conference in the Department, at which you can safely give information for quotation or off the record.

In general a Minister will tend to become more conscious of individual journalists and less conscious of particular newspapers. The effect of having the entire daily and weekly press laid out for one's perusal is that one skims through it and has often only the haziest idea of the headlines or views of one paper rather than another. Your Private Secretary sees to it that you have cuttings concerning yourself and your Department. Moreover a Cabinet Minister tends not to rely on the press for information; he has access to Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office telegrams from every capital in the world.

Running to Stand Still

IT IS in Parliament that a Minister has his roots, and his duty to it comes first. The answering of Parliamentary Questions must take precedence over everything else. I recall once when Questions went much faster than usual, and my Question, low down on the Order Paper, was reached whilst I was still in my room upstairs; I was saved only by the fact that a colleague of mine for the same reason was absent for the Question that came

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just before mine: the Opposition made such play of his absence that the time ran out before my Question was actually reached. Sometimes, after a weary day, a Minister may have to come down to the House late at night to answer a critical attack upon him. Cabinets held in Parliament time often meet in the Prime Minister's room at the House, so that Ministers may be instantly available.

Apart from the Chamber itself, a Minister must find time to meet his colleagues in the dining-room, smoking-room, tea-room, and about the lobbies; for it is here that much of Parliament's life goes on and many of its opinions formed. A Minister who is too much about will be noticed as much as one who is too often absent: Members of Parliament expect him to get on with his job as well as to be reasonably available.

All Ministers are heavily overworked: but it is membership of the Cabinet that makes the real difference. It not only adds to the meetings that must be attended but to the sea of papers that threaten to submerge one. Besides mastering his Departmental papers, a Cabinet Minister must prepare himself for intelligent discussion on all matters that come before the Cabinet: he must also read a very wide selection of Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office telegrams.

He must run to keep standing still. There is always something to do somewhere else. Whilst he is sitting in the Cabinet or a Cabinet Committee there are papers piling up on his desk; a meeting to arrange with the Prime Minister, perhaps about an important telegram that must be quickly sent or about a matter that should perhaps come before the Cabinet; a meeting to fit in somehow with two or three of his colleagues; a debate to attend and prepare for; an M.P. to have a word with. All the time his Private Secretary will be postponing and rearranging engagements. At the end of the day, perhaps after an official dinner at which he has made a speech, he always takes home one or two red boxes stuffed with papers that must be read before he retires. Very rarely did I get to bed before 2 a.m.

Yet when a Minister loses office the sense of let-down is far more incisive than the sense of physical relief. Indeed, lacking the drive of power and high occupation, he may discover for the first time how tired he really is.

From being at the very heart of affairs and among the few dozen best-informed men in the world, faithfully served day and night, he suddenly reverts to obscurity. The invitations which had a short time before seemed to flow in embarrassing numbers, thin to a trickle. Workmen arrive to remove the direct line which linked him to his Private Office and by which he could control a great Department of State.

For a month or two, perhaps, the carry-over of the information that he carries, pressed down and overflowing, in his head may make him more knowledgeable than his successor in office—a period of grace which gives him just about time enough to learn again to make speeches and marshal his arguments without the best briefing that any public man anywhere in the world could have.

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Anthony Cronin

A Massacre of Authors

When Dulness, smiling—"Thus revive the wits!
But murder first and mince them all to bits;
As erst Medea (cruel so to save!)
A new edition of old Aeson gave;
Let standard authors, thus, like trophies borne,
Appear more glorious as more hacked and torn.
And you, my critics! in the chequered shade,
Admire new light through holes yourselves have made.
Leave not a foot of verse, a foot of stone,
A page, a grave, that they can call their own;
But spread, my sons, your glory thin or thick,
On passive paper or on solid brick.
So by each bard an alderman shall sit,
A heavy lord shall hang at every wit,
And while on fame's triumphal car they ride,
Some slave of mine be pinioned to their side."
Alexander Pope, THE DUNCIAD

IT MAY possibly be true that there is no such thing as valuable criticism at all, except advice from one writer to another, like "tell the truth and shame the devil." Most artists would probably agree that the only really important thing is that the work should be brought into existence; what happens to it afterwards is very much a secondary matter. And criticism is of course concerned with what happens to it afterwards, a kind of politics, an attempt to exercise power. It is impossible to remember an important instance where what a poet did was a result of what a critic (who was not also a poet and usually a friend) said. Of course there is obviously a pure critical passion, an overwhelming urge in certain people who are not themselves creative to alter judgment, the critic feeling so intensely about misunderstanding, neglect, mis-reading, overpraise, etc., that he must put the rest of us right. Oddly enough, this pure critical passion doesn't seem ever to have produced a judgment of any value. A glance through the page-headings of Saintsbury's exhaustive *History Of English Criticism* discloses that the name of no critic at all is now remembered who was not also a creative writer of distinction.

This is hardly just a matter of style and readability, nor is it true that one's preaching is ever invalid unless one can practise what one preaches, even in the case of a moral activity like writing poetry. It may however have something to do with the fact that all good criticism is essentially a response to personality and that the creative artist responds most generously and with most excitement, for the reason perhaps that a poet remembers what a critic is always tempted to forget—only those poems can exist which have in fact been written.

Though the poet may be tempted to write criticism as propaganda for his work, or as a substitute for work that he has not done, or in an attempt to put in order his ideas about what needs to be done, the failure of the specialist critic may be due to a much

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more desperate attempt to achieve self-expression. The commonest form of this failure would of course be the transference of his own dullness to something that was originally exciting, so that if he were a dull man or a disappointed man the poetry through his eyes would appear a dull, disappointing business.

But times change. Just now the prestige of the critic is higher than it has ever been before. Further, though the record of the critic who is also a professional pedagogue is even poorer than the record of the pure critic, some of the most influential critics of our time, Professor I. A. Richards and Dr. F. R. Leavis for example, are not only critics but teachers as well—and a whole new school has recently appeared which seems dedicated to the belief that the good academic critic is the person best qualified to write the poetry which other academic critics will eventually discuss, a reasonable enough proposition in itself. Professor Richards is commonly credited with having been the inventor of the analytic method known as The New Criticism, but it is on Dr. Leavis that most of the still newer academicism seems to be centred. After many years during which his complaints about "Metropolitan literary society and the associated University milieux" were given some colour by the fact that his own influence was notably small, his persistence appears to have been rewarded, at least in the provincial universities from which so many of the new writers are coming. He gets more space, for example, in the index of such a work as Dr. Donald Davie's *Purity Of Diction In English Verse* than any living writer except T. S. Eliot, and when Mr. Eliot is mentioned in certain circles nowadays it is frequently in the Doctor's company. (A recent review by Dr. Davie of a book by Dr. Leavis referred all through to *Dr.* Eliot, which of course is an accurate description, but an odd emphasis.)

An examination of the influence of any critic lays itself open to the charge of being an indulgence in the most pernicious critical activity of all—the criticism of the criticism, the mirrors facing each other with the objects, the poor poems, diminishing to infinity in between. But it is worth examining certain aspects of the New Academic Criticism in general and the work of Dr. Leavis in particular because it is not so much the individual judgments that are important as the attitudes that underlie them.

THE New Criticism, commonly so called, may not in fact be quite as new as all that.

The poem on the Cat *was doubtless by its author considered as a trifle, but it is not a happy trifle. In the first stanza* the azure flowers *that* blow, *show resolutely a rhyme is sometimes made when it cannot easily be found.* Selima, *the* Cat, *is called a nymph, with some violence both to language and sense; but there is good use made of it when it is done; for of the two lines,*

> *What female heart can gold despise?*
> *What cat's averse to fish?*

the first refers merely to the nymph, and the second only to the cat. The sixth stanza contains a melancholy truth, that a favourite has no friend*; but the last ends in a pointed sentence of no relation to the purpose; if* what glistered *had been gold, the cat would not have gone into the water; and, if she had, would not less have been drowned.*

Thus Dr. Johnson, on *Gray's Ode On A Favourite Cat, Drowned In A Tub Of Goldfish.* Johnson believed that one should pay the poet the compliment of taking him at his word, that the poem and its 'meaning' were not two separate things. If he wished to praise or blame he took the actual words of the poem and held them up for our inspection, and I see no reason to doubt that he believed also that poems should be at least as well written as prose. Mr. L. D. Lerner remarked recently in *The London Magazine* that

The achievement of "Scrutiny" is, in a way, peculiar to the twentieth century: it is the building up of a body of practical criticisms, of substantiated literary judgements that has surely no equal in extent and quality. The

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conception of practical criticism, explicitly formulated, is certainly modern. In Dr. Leavis's essay on him, Coleridge is suggested as the first practical critic of importance, and even he is said to show more promise than achievement. Its real founders are of this century: Eliot, Graves, Richards, Middleton Murry, the American New Critics. "Scrutiny" set out from the beginning to apply their methods not sporadically but systematically, over the whole field of English literature.

This seems to me very like nonsense. (Mr. Lerner went on to say that "in wilder moments" one was "tempted to use the phrase that would please its contributors most, and say that *Scrutiny* taught us to read".) It is in fact tantamount to a claim that in some obscure way the writers in *Scrutiny* invented English poetry in the 20th century. But of course it was Eliot and Pound between them who by their work brought a critical revolution into being as well as a poetical one, and it was more than a decade after the publication of *Prufrock* and *Mauberly* that Dr. Leavis abused Matthew Arnold in *New Bearings in English Poetry*. It was poetry which demanded analysis and did not seek to evade actuality that forced analysis and the test of the actual on the critics.

In its usual manifestations the analytic method has now developed into a sort of literary necrophily: the poems must be dead for the reader before they can be enjoyed at all. Nowhere in the average specimen of professionally analytic criticism (all good criticism is to some extent analytic) can one discern the faintest glimmer of excitement about the nature and quality of the experience that makes the poem, and the difference between, say, Johnson and the average professional analyst of today is that Johnson dignifies poetry by questioning it in terms of experience all the time.

In a new collection of critical essays, for example, *Interpretations*, edited by John Wain, "a few of the younger critics" are asked "to demonstrate what they meant by 'reading' " (some of the essays were originally published in a magazine as a series called "How To Read A Poem"). The astonishing thing about the whole book is the apparent indifference of the critics to what the poems are in fact about. The book for instance contains an essay by Mr. W. W. Robson on Wordsworth's great poem *Resolution and Independence*. Now, *Resolution and Independence* is a poem about money and the terrible fear of destitution. It does everything that can be done for the reader who feels its relevance, short of altering his circumstances, and of course unless the reader happens to be a critic as well no poem can give him money. Like other great poems this one deepens the reader's understanding of his situation, consoles him by reminding him that great spirits have been similarly afflicted, and while asserting the truth of the tragic view of the struggle against necessity in any form, reminds him also of values which transcend the tragic outcome. For a reader not short of money, but confronted as everybody is with necessity in some other shape, the poem would still act as a means to greater understanding. These effects are possible because of Wordsworth's vision through various 'objective correlatives,' of the reality of his own situation and because he had an analytic mind and knew what he was about. One is entitled of course to analyse his poem in greater detail than this, to discover and to admire the processes by which a bare prose statement, roughly paraphraseable as "do not be afraid, in the midst of any misfortune we can survive with dignity" becomes a poem. The prose statement is arguable; the poem is not; it is possible that through analysis, through careful attention to the actual words of the poem, a critic might discover why. That is he might discover something about the nature and the effect of poetry. One's objection to Mr. Robson's essay is that he goes on for eleven pages of "close, analytic, practical criticism" without seeming to realise what the poem is about at all, or demonstrating that it has done anything whatever to him or for him. He seems in fact quite unaware of the existence of want or

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money or tragedy. If he had, as Johnson might have, made a few observations of his own about the want of money they would have been more or less valuable according to the extent of his own experience and perception. But his essay suggests a curious incapacity for experience which of course debars him from assessing the experience behind the poem, and in the end he succeeds only in attaching some of the pedanticism and dullness of his own mind to the poem, as a fog will cling to the surfaces with which it comes in contact.

His essay is not, I am afraid, remarkable, and I have singled it out only because *Resolution and Independence* is one of the best poems dealt with, and because it is about a subject one is naturally angry to see trifled with in addition to one's natural anger at this sort of trifling with poetry at all. The authors of these essays are erudite enough and the essays prove them to be wide and painstaking readers. It is unfortunate that nothing at all in terms of illumination of their own or anybody else's experience should result from their knowledge of how precisely to read a poem and from the great number of poems they have so analytically read. This must console, however, those who had begun to doubt the wisdom of their own habit of not bothering to read a poet who bored them. One of the distinguishing marks of academic criticism has always been that the question of boredom was never allowed to arise. The ground must be covered in any case, for what board of examiners would take 'he bores me' for an answer? And we have Dr. Leavis's word for it that before he finally 'dislodged' Milton, a pocket edition of him was the only book he carried steadily in his pocket for four years. It is an impressive story and typical of the Doctor's persistence, of his doggedness, and of the ultimate futility he shares with the 'young' contributors to Mr. Wain's collection.

DR. LEAVIS'S reputation as an original and striking critic (to many people a 'great' critic) is now well established. No critic of our time, none indeed in history, has demanded and received a more single-minded loyalty, or has so successfully imposed a rigid orthodoxy on his followers. He has defined for his disciples the limits of the 'Tradition,' a narrow canon to which, although Pope is central, the 'coarser-minded' Swift and Dryden are apparently not admitted. Hardly any living poets except Mr. Ronald Bottrall and the 'early' Eliot are allowed to tread this sacred ground. Yet when we search for the original basis of this tightly interlocked structure we find it bafflingly difficult to define. Although a certain daring simplicity of statement, even of generalisation, is nearly always a mark of the great original, simplicity of statement is the last thing to be looked for in Dr. Leavis's case, and he never permits himself a generalisation of any kind about either the nature of life or the ultimate function of literature. This, in his own view, is a virtue, for he believes in pure literary criticism, and says it is no part of the function of the critic to hazard philosophical judgments, thus denying the fact that every judgment worth the name about anything is a judgment in the first place about being alive. His criticism is what Mr. Wain calls 'close' and Mr. Lerner 'practical.' On the other hand we hear now and then something about 'morality,' though on this subject Dr. Leavis's closeness and practicality seem to desert him, for it is difficult to remember a statement about any particular poem as a moral judgment on a particular experience, and we are left in the dark about what Dr. Leavis's own views would be on many of the subjects which poems explore. Morality in the end, like much else, seems to be a matter of diction, which is not a half-truth, but a millionth of a truth.

Compared to the average don, no doubt, Dr. Leavis is an earnest and serious critic, for many things are superior to the ordinary brand of donnish bookmanship and belle-lettrisme. His reputation as a rebel in academic circles has been well-earned by attacks on the reputations of dead classics, which though they have a way of following Mr. Eliot's judgments fairly closely (Milton, Shelley, etc.), are certainly far from the

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culled-roses discussions of his colleagues. Yet, like the criticism of those colleagues (whom he so tirelessly harangues), his own is in the end an assessment of comparative skills. It is not certainly an expression of delight in the mystery of the human personality, and is always a rather meagre response to the personality of the poet concerned; so that if the older kind of port and slippers don was a gourmet who thought of poetry as an adjunct to the good life, Dr. Leavis may rather be compared to one of those snakes whose digestive powers are astonishing but who do not evince much enjoyment of their meal.

His famous reassessment of Pope for example comes down in the end to nothing more than praise of Pope's versification, and in oddly vague language at that.

When Pope is pre-occupied with the metrical structure, the weight, the pattern of his couplets, he is bringing to bear on his 'materials' habits of thought and feeling, and habits of ordering thought and feeling. The habits are those of a great and ardent representative of Augustan civilisation.

We have only to compare this with Auden's judgment on the same poem (*The Dunciad*) to see a significant difference:

No great poem can be written without genuine passion; hostile as the æsthetic of the Augustans might be to most kinds of passion there was one it could and did encourage, a passion for the civilised intelligent life, and it is this which burns so fiercely throughout Pope's poem. To have seen Dullness, the goddess of minor and in themselves unimportant figures, as a really formidable and eternal threat to the City of Man was a vision in its own way as important to the City as Dante's of Paradise or Wordsworth's of Nature.

The difference here is a difference of fundamental attitude. A great and ardent representative of Augustan civilisation Pope certainly was, but it is more important to feel for him as a poet, a contemporary and an ally. Auden's criticism states and clarifies the relevance of Pope's poem to our circumstances; Dr. Leavis's odd remark about the times when Pope was preoccupied with the weight, pattern, and metrical structure of his couplets seems to imply that *The Dunciad* is important only in the same way as is one of those chairs in the Wallace Collection or the Victoria and Albert Museum which have a rope across them to prevent you from sitting down: you can only admire them and wish we lived in a world like that.

But the view of literature which all this insistence on the importance of the tradition finally encourages is not one in which dead poets are seen as really relevant at all. The interest they have is technical and historical; and though there is an occasional tremor and a certain dry passion in the curator's voice as he reminds us of the bitter quarrels which preceded the admission of some of the exhibits as genuine, we feel ultimately as removed from the worries and the desperate day-to-day struggle to make moral ends meet as we used to do when we fell asleep within sound of the urbane accents of the older type of academic:

That a liking for the Miltonizing blank verse of the eighteenth century is (in spite of the generous inclusiveness of the project) not beyond Dr. Tillyard's powers to achieve I am sufficiently convinced; he has, I think, supplied plenty of evidence of it in this book. For instance, he is capable of convincing himself, with a show of analysis (I am perhaps prejudiced here, since his account of Keats's ode affects me as being like a miscomprehending and ruinous adaptation of the analysis which I myself elaborated two or three years ago), that "Lycidas" and the "Ode To A Nightingale" are almost identical in structure and significance. . . .

Dr. Leavis's criticism of poetry is, in spite of the entertaining autobiographical asides, extremely dull. Like Mr. Robson and the others he does not think that poetry applies immediately to our personal circumstances and that the critic's job is primarily to prove its

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importance by demonstrating its relevance, not to make abstract evaluations and assessments in terms of an invented formula. All good poems are important. Why? Some good poems are more important to us than others. Why? Dr. Leavis has nowhere given us a convincing answer, though he can hardly be presumed to believe that there is so much general agreement about the answers that an elaborate critical structure can be erected over the abyss. Certain questions, the relationship of poetry to philosophical or religious belief for example, find no general agreement at all; but in the criticism of T. S. Eliot we find at best a brilliant extension of the frontiers of agreement, and at least a definition of the problem itself. It is because the criticism of the practising artist is always ultimately concerned with the questions which are never far away in the moment of composition that it has its value and may be called 'creative.' The mind which functions best on these problems, however, is the artist-mind, generally distinguished by a disturbing simplicity, a rare capacity for the very simple thought which can control an infinite complexity of experience. This ascetic simplicity, closely related to more than one of the cardinal virtues, is for example a characteristic of critics as different as Wordsworth and Mr. Eliot. Dr. Leavis and his followers are certainly not remarkable for it, but then the value of simplicity is certainly not one of the lessons likely to be learned in a university.

Of the importance of the pedagogue and of the university as a training ground Dr. Leavis is certainly not in any doubt:

If Mr. Auden's successor doesn't become acquainted with serious criticism and the standards of maturity at the university he will not readily find help towards remedying the lack when he enters the larger literary world.

The word undergraduate is his favourite term of contempt:

The conditions which account for the arrest of Mr. Auden's remarkable talent at the stage of undergraduate 'brilliance' are not, we are disconcertingly reminded (by a reviewer in "The Times Literary Supplement") *less potent now than they were. Our critic says that Auden was "the Oxford intellectual with a bag of poetic squibs in his pockets" without seeming to realise that he was the undergraduate intellectual—permanently undergraduate and representing an immaturity that the ancient universities, not so long ago, expected their better undergraduates to transcend. It is the more disconcerting in that one can't avoid a suspicion (the signs are strong) that in this criticism we have a voice from the university—and not, of course, a junior one. ("The Common Pursuit," 1952.)*

Dr. Leavis's ultimate judgment of Auden was given recently in reply to the article of Mr. Lerner's already quoted:

Auden can yield no satisfaction at all: he can only bore and exasperate. He could be taken for a poet of satisfying creative achievement only by those who are so much of the cultural conditions he represents that they cannot criticise them—they cannot believe them to be new and unprecedented. . . . Criticism and the facts have at last told and Auden has been virtually abandoned: even in "The Times Literary Supplement" we are unlikely to hear much more of him as a great poet.

It is difficult to discover from *New Bearings* what exactly Mr. Eliot was being praised for. Dr. Leavis's aversion to a summary of his position in precise terms was even then a notable feature of his criticism. The Victorians and Georgians were escapists; Mr. Eliot was not. They did not belong to the tradition; he did. So much is clear. But as to how a contemporary poet achieves that enviable position, and what is the nature of the reality with which he must get to grips, we are left wondering. There is a point at which Dr. Leavis says clearly, "That is the peculiar nature of Mr. Eliot's achievement," when he apparently refers to a sentence in the preceding paragraph reading "To invent techniques that shall be adequate to the ways of feeling

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and modes of experience of adult, sensitive moderns is difficult in the extreme," but this is as near as we get.

Taking it, however, as a guide we may discover something about the true nature of Dr. Leavis's critical standards. In *The Common Pursuit* there is an essay, "Approaches To T. S. Eliot," in which there is a lengthy digression on the precise chronology of the growth of Mr. Eliot's academic reputation. We are left in no doubt that it was Dr. Leavis who was responsible, and that late in the day though it was, he suffered for the stand he took. Here as elsewhere an attitude little short of proprietary is adopted towards those early pieces which Dr. Leavis admires, for everything in fact prior to the publication of *New Bearings* in 1932. Yet there has been a distinct cooling off since then, and latterly there has even been a suggestion that *The Waste Land* is a little 'contrived.' The fact that Mr. Eliot has gone on working since the claim was staked seems to have caused some embarrassment. Certainly no other poet, not Auden (arrested at the stage of undergraduate brilliance at which Dr. Leavis felt some admiration for his talent), not even Mr. Empson (who in any case was not as likely to do so as Mr. Ronald Bottrall) has written precisely as Dr. Leavis would like his ideal poet, his *alter ego*, to write.

The responsibility for the failure does not however lie solely with the poets themselves. It is attributed to the lack of an audience having what Dr. Leavis calls a trained critical intelligence, the product of wide reading, much comparison, and of course guidance from the most highly trained critics of all. If Auden, for example, had had such an audience, instead of the metropolitan literary cliques which encouraged him to remain perpetually immature, he might, Dr. Leavis thinks, have done something with his undoubted talent. That he did not have it is the fault of those who refused to be trained in a proper discrimination. This of course is the ultimate statement of the critic's claim, and puts Mr. Eliot's achievement in inventing "techniques . . . adequate to the ways of feeling and modes of experience of adult, sensitive moderns" in perspective. We now see who in fact is responsible for good poetry when it appears; it is the audience, the trained critic, of course academically trained in the proper way, who is all-important; it is the adult sensitive moderns demanding to be satisfied who are responsible for the poetry, which is not the product of an individual personality at grips with experience, but of 'culture'—meaning by culture presumably what Mr. Empson recently referred to as "sheer platoons of pompous young men, each of them mouthing and leering and insinuating and displaying his donnish 'intimacy' in precisely the same manner, a manner into which he has been drilled." We can now see the reason for Dr. Leavis's emotion on the subject of Mr. Eliot's academic reputation, for it is not the bringing into existence of the work which is important, but its reception afterwards; and indeed the argument goes further, to the point at which it is asserted that Mr. Eliot could hardly have written the poems at all had Dr. Leavis not been waiting to write a book about him more than a decade later.

IT SOMETIMES seems at the moment as if the modern movement (if we may apply that term to the poetry and prose which in one way or another acknowledges the existence of Baudelaire) was coming to an end. The attempt by the giant figures of the last hundred years or so to maintain in the middle of the noise and uproar of expanding industrial civilisation the means by which the vision of one individual could still be conveyed to others has had an ironic anti-climax. Criticism has calmly taken over the work of the individuals concerned, and from all the disagreements and conflicts of 'method' between critics has emerged what could almost be called a conspiracy: a conspiracy to ignore what in fact each particular work is about, what the poet concerned said or tried to say, a determination never to admit the existence of the wood while pulling the trees apart. The more 'methodical, close, and practical' criticism becomes, the more ambiguities, parallels, and symbols it discovers in each

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innocent poem, the less important seem the poem, the experience behind it, and the man who suffered. Never, it is safe to say, were so many people engaged in interpreting poetry to an unwilling public; never, among the interpreters, was there such an appearance of dreary orthodoxy.

We have heard a good deal about new movements. As far as criticism is concerned the lineaments and true nature of the movement are now clearly apparent. Academic criticism is not a new phenomenon; academics have always had time and to spare to take in each other's washing. Until comparatively recently they were content to continue undisturbed, remote from what Dr. Leavis has called "the larger literary world," and themselves hardly aware of the existence of modern literature. Now it seems that a new generation has arrived, entrenched in jobs with plenty of leisure attached, aware of the achievements of their colleagues in America, ultimately the servants and prisoners of society and therefore the willing exponents of an orthodoxy. In England at least, the example of Dr. Leavis, the first academic critic to assert the paramount, unique, and irreplaceable importance of the uncreative commentator, has apparently been a source of excitement and a spur to emulation. Nor is it surprising that we seem to be entering on a period when the younger academics, spotting maybe the flaw in the Doctor's logic, should go a step further and devote their subsidised leisure to proving that the critic who has learned the trade can with the same industry and lack of concern for the importance of a personal vision supply the poems as well.

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W. H. Auden

Hic et Ille

A

EVERY man carries with him through life a mirror, as unique and impossible to get rid of as his shadow.

A parlour-game for a wet afternoon—imagining the mirrors of one's friends. *A* has a huge pier-glass, gilded and baroque, *B* a discreet little pocket-mirror in a pigskin case with his initials stamped on the back; whenever one looks at *C*, he is in the act of throwing his mirror away but, if one looks in his pocket or up his sleeve, one always finds another, like an extra ace.

*

MOST, perhaps all, our mirrors are inaccurate and uncomplimentary, though to varying degrees and in various ways. Some magnify, some diminish, others return lugubrious, comic, derisive, or terrifying images.

But the properties of our own particular mirror are not so important as we sometimes like to think. We shall be judged, not by the kind of mirror found on us, but by the use we have made of it, by our *riposte* to our reflection.

*

THE psychoanalyst says: "Come, my good man, I know what is the matter with you. You have a distorting mirror. No wonder you feel guilty. But cheer up. For a slight consideration I shall be delighted to correct it for you. There! Look! A perfect image. Not a trace of distortion. Now you are one of the elect. That will be £666, please."

And immediately come seven devils, and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

*

THE politician, secular or clerical, promises the crowd that, if only they will hand in their private mirrors to him, to be melted down into one large public mirror, the curse of Narcissus will be taken away.

*

NARCISSUS does not fall in love with his reflection because it is beautiful, but because it is *his*. If it were his beauty that enthralled him, he would be set free in a few years by its fading.

*

"AFTER all," sighed Narcissus the hunchback, "on *me* it looks good."

*

THE contemplation of his reflection does not turn Narcissus into Priapus: the spell in which he is trapped is not a desire for himself but the satisfaction of not desiring the nymphs.

*

"I PREFER my pistol to my p . . . ," said Narcissus, "it cannot take aim without my permission"—and took a pot-shot at Echo.

*

NARCISSUS (drunk): "I shouldn't look at me like that, if I were you. I suppose you think you know who I am. Well, let me tell *you*, my dear, that one of these days you are going to get a very big surprise *indeed*!"

*

A VAIN woman comes to realise that vanity is a sin and in order not to succumb to

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temptation, has all the mirrors removed from her house. Consequently, in a short while she cannot remember how she looks. She remembers that vanity is sinful but she forgets that she is vain.

*

He who despises himself, nevertheless esteems himself as a self-despiser (Nietzsche). A vain person is always vain *about* something. He overestimates the importance of some quality or exaggerates the degree to which he possesses it, but the quality has some real importance and he does possess it to some degree. The phantasy of overestimation or exaggeration makes the vain person comic, but the fact that he cannot be vain about nothing makes his vanity a venial sin, because it is always open to correction by appeal to objective fact.

A proud person, on the other hand, is not proud *of* anything, he *is* proud, he exists proudly. Pride is neither comic nor venial, but the most mortal of all sins because, lacking any basis in concrete particulars, it is both incorrigible and absolute: one cannot be more or less proud, only proud or humble.

Thus, if a painter tries to portray the Seven Deadly Sins, his experience will furnish him readily enough with images symbolic of Gluttony, Lust, Sloth, Anger, Avarice, and Envy, for all of these are qualities of a person's relations to others and the world, but no experience can provide an image of Pride, for the relation it qualifies is the subjective relation of a person to himself. In the seventh frame, therefore, the painter can only place, in lieu of a canvas, a mirror.

*

Le Moi est toujours haïssable (Pascal). True enough, but it is equally true that only *le Moi* is lovable in itself, not merely as an object of desire.

B

The absolutely banal—my sense of my own uniqueness. How strange that one should treasure this more than any of the exciting and interesting experiences, emotions, ideas that come and go, leaving it unchanged and unmoved.

*

The Ego which recalls a previous condition of a now changed Self cannot believe that it, too, has changed. The Ego fancies that it is like Zeus who could assume one bodily appearance after another, now a swan, now a bull, while all the time remaining Zeus. Remembering some wrong or foolish action of the past, the Ego feels shame, as one feels ashamed of having been seen in bad company, at having been associated with a Self whom it regards as responsible for the act. Shame, not guilt: Guilt, it fancies, is what the Self should feel.

*

Every autobiography is concerned with two characters, a Don Quixote, the Ego, and a Sancho Panza, the Self. In one kind of autobiography the Self occupies the stage and narrates, like a Greek Messenger, what the Ego is doing off-stage. In another kind it is the Ego who is the narrator and the Self who is described without being able to answer back. If the same person were to write his autobiography twice, first in one mode and then in the other, the two accounts would be so different that it would be hard to believe that they referred to the same person. In one he would appear as an obsessed creature, a passionate Knight for ever serenading Faith or Beauty, humourless and over-life-size: in the other as coolly detached, full of humour and self-mockery, lacking in a capacity for affection, easily bored and smaller than life-size. As Don Quixote seen by Sancho Panza, he never giggles; as Sancho Panza seen by Don Quixote, he never prays.

*

An honest self-portrait is extremely rare because a man who has reached the degree of self-consciousness presupposed by the desire to paint his own portrait has almost always also developed an ego-consciousness which paints himself painting himself, and introduces artificial highlights and dramatic shadows.

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As an autobiographer, Boswell is almost alone in his honesty.

"I determined, if the Cyprian Fury should seize me, to participate my amorous flame with a genteel girl."

Stendhal would never have dared write such a sentence. He would have said to himself: "Phrases like *Cyprian Fury* and *amorous flame* are clichés; I must put down in plain words exactly what I mean." But he would have been wrong, for the Self thinks in clichés and euphemisms, not in the style of the Code Napoléon.

*

It is possible to imagine oneself as rich when one is poor, as beautiful when ugly, as generous when stingy, etc., but it is impossible to imagine oneself as either more or less imaginative than in fact one is. A man whose every thought was commonplace could never know this to be the case.

*

I cannot help believing that my thoughts and acts are my own, not inherited reflexes and prejudices. The most I can say is: "Father taught me such-and-such and I agree with him." My prejudices must be right because, if I knew them to be wrong, I could no longer hold them.

*

Subjectively, my experience of life is one of having to make a series of choices between given alternatives and it is this experience of doubt, indecision, temptation, that seems more important and memorable than the actions I take. Further, if I make a choice which I consider the wrong one, I can never believe, however strong the temptation to make it, that it was inevitable, that I could not and should not have made the opposite choice. But when I look at others, I cannot see them making choices; I can only see what they actually do and, if I know them well, it is rarely that I am surprised, that I could not have predicted, given his character and upbringing, how so-and-so would behave.

Compared with myself, that is, other people seem at once less free and stronger in character. No man, however tough he appears to his friends, can help portraying himself in his autobiography as a sensitive plant.

*

To peek is always an unfriendly act, a theft of knowledge; we all know this and cannot peek without feeling guilty. As compensation we demand that what we discover by peeking shall be surprising. If I peer through the keyhole of a bishop's study and find him saying his prayers, the "idleness" of my curiosity is at once rebuked, but if I catch him making love to the parlour-maid I can persuade myself that my curiosity has really achieved something.

In the same way, the private papers of an author must, if they are to satisfy the public, be twice as unexpected and shocking as his published books.

*

Private letters, entries in journals, etc., fall into two classes, those in which the writer is in control of his situation—what he writes about is what he chooses to write—and those in which the situation dictates what he writes. The terms personal and impersonal are here ambiguous: the first class is impersonal in so far as the writer is looking at himself in the world as if at a third person, but personal in so far as it is his personal act so to look—the signature to the letter is really his and he is responsible for its contents. *Vice versa*, the second class is personal in that the writer is identical with what he writes, but impersonal in that it is the situation not he which enforces that identity.

The second class are what journalists call "human documents" and should be published, if at all, anonymously.

C

If we were suddenly to become disembodied spirits, a few might behave better than before, but most of us would behave very much worse.

*

The Body is a born Aristotelian, its guiding principle the Golden Mean. The most

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"fleshly" of the sins are not Gluttony and Lust, but Sloth and Cowardice: on the other hand, without a body, we could neither conceive of nor practise the virtue of Prudence.

*

You taught me language and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse.

In the debate between the Body and Soul, if the former could present its own case objectively, it would always win. As it is, it can only protest the Soul's misstatement of its case by subjective acts of rebellion, coughs, belches, constipation, etc., which always put it in the wrong.

*

All bodies have the same vocabulary of physical symptoms to select from, but the way in which they use it varies from one body to another: in some the style of bodily behaviour is banal, in some highly mannered, in some vague, in some precise, and, occasionally, to his bewilderment, a physician encounters one which is really witty.

*

Anxiety affects the Body and the Mind in different ways: it makes the former develop compulsions, a concentration on certain actions to the exclusion of others; it makes the latter surrender to day-dreaming, a lack of concentration on any thought in particular.

*

In a state of panic, a man runs round in circles by himself. In a state of joy, he links hands with others and they dance round in a circle together.

*

In the judgment of my nose, some of my neighbours are bad, but none is my inferior.

*

The ear tends to be lazy, craves the familiar, and is shocked by the unexpected: the eye, on the other hand, tends to be impatient, craves the novel and is bored by repetition. Thus, the average listener prefers concerts confined to works by the old masters and it is only the highbrow who is willing to listen to new works, but the average reader wants the latest book and it is the classics of the past which are left to the highbrow.

Similarly, so long as a child has to be read to or told stories, he insists on the old tale being retold again and again, but, once he has learned to read for himself, he rarely reads the same book twice.

*

As seen reflected in a mirror, a room or a landscape seems more solidly there in space than they look themselves. In that purely visual world nothing can be hailed, moved, smashed, or eaten, and it is only the observer himself who, by shifting his position or closing his eyes, can change.

*

From the height of 10,000 feet, the earth appears to the human eye as it appears to the eye of the camera; that is to say, all history is reduced to nature. This has the salutary effect of making historical evils, like national divisions and political hatreds, seem absurd. I look down from an aeroplane upon a stretch of land which is obviously continuous. That, across it, marked by a tiny ridge or river or even by no topographical sign whatever, there should run a frontier, and that the human beings living on one side should hate or refuse to trade with or be forbidden to visit those on the other side, is instantaneously revealed to me as ridiculous. Unfortunately, I cannot have this revelation without simultaneously having the illusion that there are no historical values either. From the same height I cannot distinguish between an outcrop of rock and a Gothic cathedral, or between a happy family playing in a backyard and a flock of sheep, so that I am unable to feel any difference between dropping a bomb upon one or the other. If the effect of distance upon the observed and the observer were mutual, so that, as the objects on the ground shrank in size and lost their uniqueness, the observer in the aeroplane felt himself shrinking and becoming more and more generalised, we should either give up flying as too painful or create a heaven on earth.

*

Those who accuse the movies of having a deleterious moral effect may well be right but

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not for the reasons they usually give. It is not what movies are about, gangsters or adultery, which does the damage, but the naturalistic nature of the medium itself which encourages a phantastic conception of time. In all narrative art, the narration of the action takes less time than it would take in real life, but in the epic or the drama or the novel, the artistic conventions are so obvious that a confusion of art with life is impossible. Suppose that there is a scene in a play in which a man woos a woman; this may take forty minutes by the clock to play, but the audience will have the sense of having watched a scene which really took, let us say, two hours.

The absolute naturalism of the camera destroys this sense and encourages the audience to imagine that, in real life as on the screen, the process of wooing takes forty minutes.

When he grows impatient, the movie addict does not cry "Hurry!"; he cries "Cut!"

*

A DAY-DREAM is a meal at which images are eaten. Some of us are gourmets, some gourmands, and a good many take their images pre-cooked out of a can and swallow them down whole, absentmindedly and with little relish.

*

EVEN if it be true that our primary interest is in sexual objects only, and that all our later interests are symbolic transferences, we could never make such a transference if the new objects of interest did not have a real value of their own. If all round hills were suddenly to turn into breasts, all caves into wombs, all towers into phalli, we should not be pleased or even shocked: we should be bored.

*

BETWEEN the ages of seven and twelve my phantasy life was centred around lead-mines and I spent many hours imagining in the minutest detail the Platonic Idea of all lead-mines. In planning its Concentrating Mill, I ran into difficulty: I had to choose between two types of a certain machine for separating the slimes. One I found more "beautiful" but the other was, I knew from my reading, the more efficient. My feelings at the time, I remember very clearly, was that I was confronted by a moral choice and that it was my duty to choose the second.

*

LIKE all polemical movements, existentialism is one-sided. In their laudable protest against systematic philosophers, like Hegel or Marx, who would reduce all historical existence to nature, the existentialists have invented an equally imaginary anthropology from which all elements, like man's physical nature, or his reason, about which general statements can be made, are excluded.

A task for an existentialist theologian: to preach a sermon on the topic *The Sleep of Christ.*

*

ONE of the most horrible, yet most important, discoveries of our age has been that, if you really wish to destroy a person and turn him into an automaton, the surest method is not physical torture, in the strict sense, but simply to keep him awake, i.e. in an existential relation to life without intermission.

*

ALL the existentialist descriptions of choice, like Pascal's wager or Kierkegaard's leap, are interesting as dramatic literature, but are they true? When I look back at the three or four choices in my life which have been decisive, I find that, at the time I made them, I had very little sense of the seriousness of what I was doing and it was only later I discovered that what had then seemed an unimportant brook was, in fact, a Rubicon.

For this I am very thankful since, had I been fully aware of the risk I was taking, I should never have dared take such a step.

In a reflective and anxious age, it is surely better, pedagogically, to minimise rather than to exaggerate the risks involved in a choice, just as one encourages a boy to swim who is afraid of the water by telling him that nothing can happen.

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SINCE he is the only one who has a real history, man is the only creature who has a face. Every face is a present witness to the fact that its owner has a past behind him which might have been otherwise, and a future ahead of him in which some possibilities are more probable than others.

To "read" a face is to guess at what might have been and what may still be. The noblest face reveals potential evil overcome, the vilest potential good suppressed.

Children, for whom most future possibilities are equally probable, and the dead for whom all possibilities have been reduced to zero, do not have faces but, like animals, wear inscrutable masks.

*

UNDER the stress of emotion, animals and children "make" faces, but they do not have one.

*

So much countenance and so little face (Henry James). Every European visitor to the United States is struck by the comparative rarity of what he would call a face, by the frequency of men and women who look like elderly babies. If he stays in the States for any length of time, he will learn that this cannot be put down to a lack of sensibility—the American feels the joys and sufferings of human life as keenly as anybody else. The only plausible explanation I can find lies in his different attitude to the past. To have a face, in the European sense of the word, it would seem that one must not only enjoy and suffer but also desire to preserve the memory of even the most humiliating and unpleasant experiences of the past.

More than any other people, perhaps, the Americans obey the scriptural injunction: "Let the dead bury their dead."

*

A CARICATURE of a face admits that its owner has a past but denies him a future. He has created his features up to a point but now they have taken charge of him so that he can never change. A mask is inscrutable—it cannot be read: a caricature is obvious—it does not need to be read.

We enjoy equally caricatures of our friends and of our enemies: of our friends because we cannot bear the thought of their dying, of our enemies because the thought that they might become lovable is unwelcome.

*

WHEN I consider others I can easily believe that their bodies express their personalities and that the two are inseparable. But it is impossible for me not to feel that my body is other than I, that I inhabit it like a house, and that my face is a mask which, with or without my consent, conceals my real nature from others.

*

IT IS impossible consciously to approach a mirror without composing or "making" a special face, and if we catch sight of our reflection unawares we rarely recognise ourselves. I cannot read my face in the mirror because I am already obvious to myself.

*

THE image of myself which I try to create in my own mind in order that I may love myself is very different from the image which I try to create in the minds of others in order that they may love me.

*

MOST faces are asymmetric, i.e. one side is happy, the other sad, one self-confident, the other diffident, etc. By cutting up photographs it is possible to make two very different portraits, one from the two left sides, the other from the two rights. If these be now shown to the subject and to his friends, almost invariably the one which the subject prefers will be the one his friends dislike.

*

WE can imagine loving what we do not love a great deal more easily than we can imagine fearing what we do not fear. I can sympathise with a man who has a passion for collecting stamps, but if he is afraid of mice there is a gulf between us. On the other hand, if he is unafraid of spiders, of which I am terrified, I admire him as superior but I do not feel that he is a stranger.

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BETWEEN friends differences in taste or opinion are irritating in direct proportion to their triviality. If my friend takes up Vedanta, I can accept it, but if he prefers his steak well done, I feel it to be a treachery.

*

WHEN one talks to another, one is more conscious of him as a listener to the conversation than of oneself. But the moment one writes anything, be it only a note to pass down the table, one is more conscious of oneself as a reader than of the intended recipient.

Hence we cannot be as false in writing as we can in speaking nor as true. The written word can neither conceal nor reveal so much as the spoken.

*

Two card players. *A* is a good loser when, holding good cards, he makes a fatal error, but a bad loser when he is dealt cards with which it is impossible to win. With *B* it is the other way round: he cheerfully resigns himself to defeat if his hand is poor, but becomes furious if defeat is his own fault.

*

ALMOST all of our relationships begin and most of them continue as forms of mutual exploitation, a mental or physical barter, to be terminated when one or both parties run out of goods.

But if the seed of a genuine disinterested love, which is often present, is ever to develop, it is essential that we pretend to ourselves and to others that it is stronger and more developed than it is, that we are less selfish than we are. Hence the social havoc wrought by the paranoid, to whom the thought of indifference is so intolerable that he divides others into two classes, those who love him for himself alone and those who hate him for the same reason.

Do a paranoid a favour, like paying his hotel bill in a foreign city when his monthly cheque has not yet arrived, and he will take this as an expression of personal affection—the thought that you might have done it from a general sense of duty towards a fellow-countryman in distress will never occur to him. So back he comes for more until your patience is exhausted, there is a row, and he departs convinced that you are his personal enemy. In this he is right to the extent that it is difficult not to hate a person who reveals to you so clearly how little you love others.

*

Two cyclic madmen. In his elated phase, *A* feels: "I am God. The universe is full of gods. I adore all and am adored by all." *B* feels: "The universe is only a thing. I am happily free from all bonds of attachment to it." In the corresponding depressed phase, *A* feels: "I am a devil. The universe is full of devils. I hate all and am hated by all." *B* feels: "I am only a thing to the universe which takes no interest in me." This difference is reflected in their behaviour. When elated *A* does not wash and even revels in dirt because all things are holy. He runs after women, after whores in particular whom he intends to save through Love. But *B* in this mood takes a fastidious pride in his physical cleanliness as a mark of his superiority and is chaste for the same reason. When depressed *A* begins to wash obsessively to cleanse himself from guilt and feels a morbid horror of all sex, *B* now neglects his appearance because "nobody cares how I look," and tries to be a Don Juan seducer in an attempt to compel life to take an interest in him.

A's God — Zeus–Jehovah: *B*'s God — The Unmoved Mover.

*

THE fellowship of suffering lasts only so long as none of the sufferers can escape. Open a door through which many, but not all, can escape one at a time, and the community of prisoners all too easily disintegrates into a stampeding crowd.

*

THE crowd collects to watch the wrecking-gang demolish the old mansion, fascinated by yet another proof that physical force is the Prince of this world against whom no love of the heart shall prevail.

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Roger Caillois

Illusions in Reverse

An essay which suggests that, in order to be right, it does not suffice to insist that one is wrong

FOR a long time the peoples of the world knew—and wrote—only their own history. Usually, it took the form of Annals. Year by year, and sometimes season by season, they set down the remarkable events which befell the state, its ruler, or even private individuals. This was the method used by Shu-Ma-Tsien, by Thucydides and Tacitus, and later by the medieval chroniclers, with the one difference that the Chinese seem to have conceived of history as a cyclical process, while the Westerners thought of it as a linear development. Later on, from Bossuet to Hegel, there were many who conceived of writing a universal history; the knowledge which Europe was beginning to accumulate about different peoples permitted, if not the actual accomplishment of such an ambition, at least the recognition of its interest, perhaps even of its necessity. The first authors of this kind of history thought of man's past as directed either by divine intention or by an inner dialectic, which determined in advance its ineluctable outline; each conjuncture arose from the preceding one and led to the next in the course of a single evolution in which all events were rigorously linked. Empires succeeded empires, and cultures touched hands along the route of a single triumphal march.

It was not long, however, before scholarly research and the labours of archæologists and ethnologists undermined this idea of universal history as a linear movement, as a common and continuous evolution carrying all humanity along with it. It appeared that civilisations were not so much successive as concurrent. The attempt to align them in a single chronological series had to be given up: it became clear that the different empires had been born, had developed, and had disappeared without ever suspecting their mutual existence, or ever affecting it. In the light of new evidence and more rigorous thinking, the writing of history in the West found itself constrained to become pluralist, and even cyclical. This revolution is recent; it is principally the work of Spengler and Toynbee. What is involved is a decisive mutation, as heavy with consequences as the one which shifted the earth from the centre of man's universe.

In old-style history, everything leads to the Christian West, everything is summed up in it. According to the new system, civilisations neither come to completion in, nor prolong

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themselves in, nor are summed up in those which succeed them. They have not one destiny, but similar destinies. They pass through the same phases and sink back into the same nothingness. This being so, none of them is privileged with respect to the others; all resolved similar problems, responded to similar challenges, and succumbed when their time came. The West no longer appears as a terminus but as an accident. The true view of history is no longer that of the Bible, revised by Hegel. It is that of the Etruscans —as adapted by Toynbee—who believed that the life of nations was no less mortal than that of individuals, and that it passed through an obligatory succession of phases.

These great revolutions in one's attitude toward history have not taken place by chance. They are responses to a general mood, which itself corresponds to novel conditions. In fact the first of these modern Western philosophies of history, that of Bossuet and Hegel, during the three centuries of its reign, accompanied the rise to world hegemony of Europe; the second, of Spengler and Toynbee, foreshadows and prophesies its decadence, the already-more-than-half-consummated diminution of Europe's importance.

It should be remarked, and here I come at last to my real subject, that at bottom each of the two opposed doctrines defended exactly the thesis it would have been reasonable for the other to sustain. In the time of Bossuet and up to that of Hegel, the relations between empires, and consequently the total historic development of humanity, were not yet inextricable. If the capitals of Peru and Spain were no longer independent of one another, nothing as yet linked the destinies of those who dwelt along the Yellow River, or the inhabitants of Cairo with those of Lima. Yet it was then that the historian, partly through ignorance, partly through arrogance, conceived of a single chain of causes and effects, throughout history. Inversely, it was those historians who were contemporaries of the first *World* War who established and underlined the irreducible plurality of civilisations, at the very moment when such a plurality was disappearing before their eyes.

THIS double contradiction sets one thinking. Is there a fatal blindness which leads philosophers of history inevitably astray? Certainly not. It is only, and this is wholly to their credit, that these philosophers seem more sensitive to tendencies than to situations—that is to say, more sensitive to the history which is being made than to that which has already been made. Bossuet and Hegel link a still heterogeneous world with the destiny of Europe, because Europe is on the way to conquering the world. Spengler and Toynbee insist on the discontinuity, the fragility, the mortal fate of civilisations because they foresee the end of Europe's preponderance.

This presentiment of the approaching downfall of the West, or, at least, the growing doubt as to the duration of its present supremacy, has expressed itself among many European intellectuals in an acute sense of rancour and disappointment. For fifty years now they have laboured to deny the various ideals of their culture. Since, in practice, they continue to live in it, and to live on it, and since, spontaneously and unconsciously, they continue to regard it, in spite of everything, as the very archetype of civilisation—such is the inertia of habit and the weight of daily necessity — this contradiction exasperates them. Civilisation seems to them at once the dishonour and the curse of humanity; chiefly, it goes without saying, in the form which it has taken in the Christian West. Whence a revolt, an absolute calling into question of these religious, civic, intellectual, moral, and æsthetic disciplines by which a culture is constituted, prospers, or maintains itself. Whence a rehabilitation of barbarism, a fanatic defence of its various aspects, an apology for the permanent and enduring forces which nourish and renew it, and which are, for that matter, those of nature itself: violence, instinct, the unconscious, and everything which seems outside the norms, the codes, the constraints, and the conventions that give every culture its own irreplaceable style. The taste

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for dream images, for the aberrations of vice, for the ravings of the insane, for the art of children and the sculpture of primitives, has no other origin. What is appreciated is not their particular merit but their common denominator. In the first phase, they are not preferred for themselves but because they mock what one hates. Later, in order to establish their excellence more firmly, the fanatics who exalt them apply themselves, in a new and insolent about-face, to restoring to them all the virtues they had formerly praised them for ignoring.

This rebellion, very violent in the beginning, has not lasted in the wild—and at bottom rather rhetorical—form it assumed in the era of Dadaism, for example. But the discontent which gave it birth has far from diminished. Rather, it has become a part of the atmosphere. It nourishes, in Europe especially, a tenacious *malaise* in which feelings of guilt and inferiority are strangely mingled. The same prejudice also operates, without discrimination, in favour of both rudimentary cultures and vanished cultures. What counts is distance, whether it is due to a difference in cultural levels or to remoteness in time.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples; there is in existence a book which constitutes a kind of coherent statement of this attitude, which makes a veritable system out of what has up to now only presented itself as a state of mind, diffuse and unformulated. I am referring to the brief and substantial study by the distinguished French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, called *Race and History*.* The work can be regarded as a model of its kind. The facts are unimpeachable, the hypotheses careful and limited, the demonstration impeccable. No single detail invites dispute, no argument seems questionable. And yet the whole provokes a certain uneasiness which prevents it from carrying conviction.

The author undertakes to demonstrate the equality of the different races. Since there are some who might be tempted, in the absence of any sure biological evidence, to judge these races by their civilisations, the author of *Race and History* finds himself led to maintain the proposition that all cultures are of equal value. He makes use, successively, of the following arguments: In the first place, cultures differ fundamentally in their orientation. There is no single and absolute scale of progress by which they can be graded. Each one has developed in the direction of its special preferences, and can only be judged by reference to this initial choice. Thus Western civilisation is characterised by its continuous (and successful) efforts to produce more

* Paris, 1952. To avoid misunderstandings, I think it important to state at once that for me the question of the equality of races, peoples, or cultures only has meaning if what is meant is an equality of right, not an equality of fact. In the same way, the blind, the crippled, the sick, the ignorant, and the poor are not equal, in the material sense of the word, to the seeing, the strong, the healthy, the cultivated, or the rich. The latter have greater capacities, which, moreover, do not give them more rights but only more duties. It is up to the law, if not to remedy this natural or social inequality by an adequate system of compensations, at least to place the disinherited and the privileged of every sort on a footing of absolute equality before it. In the same way, there exist at present, whether the causes are biological or historic, differences of cultural level, of power, and of value between the different cultures. They bring with them an inequality of fact. In no way do they justify an inequality of rights in favour of the so-called superior peoples, as racism proclaims. Rather, they impose supplementary burdens and a heavier responsibility. Several years ago a congress of scientists, who had not forgotten the anti-Semitic persecutions of the Hitler régime, agreed on a solemn proclamation which affirmed that nothing, in the present state of scientific knowledge, justified the slightest racial discrimination. A number of eminent Jewish figures protested. With good reason, in my opinion. They could not admit that their fate was in any way dependent on the opinion of experts. They believed it wrong to persecute Jews even if science, whose verdicts are unpredictable, might at some given moment seem to justify their elimination. And the fact is that this is a moral problem and in no way a matter of scientific truth or falsehood. It is extremely dangerous to link the two domains, even with the intention—as was the case here—of assuring the ethical domain of the support of specialised research.

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energy and to prolong the duration of human life. But other civilisations have other ideals, no less valid. Moreover, it required an equal amount of genius to perfect the various techniques of the different civilisations. Pottery required as much inventive genius as metallurgy. Finally, what looks like the superiority of a culture is in reality the result of a series of fruitful accidents. These accidents are, moreover, facilitated by the exchanges between cultures, by the pooling of their inventions, which allows the accumulation of lucky draws in the great lottery of fate.

Each of these theories is supported by convincing examples. They may sometimes be partial or excessive, but no one can contest them without producing facts and arguments just as convincing as those the author has used to buttress them. The trouble is that they quickly begin to seem a little incompatible with each other. The argument comes down to this: all cultures are equivalent and incomparable; those which enjoy developed techniques have not demonstrated more genius than those whose techniques are rudimentary; the superior cultures are superior only because of fortunate accidents or because they have appropriated the finds of the others. At this point one thinks irresistibly of the answer of the child whose mother accused him of having broken a vase: "It isn't true, it wasn't me, I didn't do it on purpose." The idea of cultural superiority makes progress at each stage of M. Lévi-Strauss's argument in the same way that the child admits his guilt a little more each time. The dialectic of the ethnologist's case can be summed up as: "The question of cultural superiority has no meaning; in any case, this superiority proves nothing; besides, where it exists it is because of chance or borrowing."

THE arguments which M. Lévi-Strauss employs are almost always valid against the error he is attacking. But they are also often valid against each other. Thus the author makes a point of attacking what he calls "false evolutionism," i.e. the "attempt to wipe out the diversity of cultures while pretending to accord it full recognition." Civilisations cannot be viewed as stages in a single development, or even converging developments moving toward a single goal where they will merge at last and lose their apparent diversity. Their differences are essential. The attempt to distinguish between stationary and progressive cultures is useless: this is an optical illusion comparable to that of the traveller who, from the window of a moving train, blandly attempts to determine the speed or immobility or direction of the trains moving past him on adjacent tracks, while ignoring the fact that he too is in motion. The truth is that any culture considers those others which are developing in a different direction from its own as inert. This blindness is, of course, reciprocal. In other words, the progress of one culture is not measurable by the system of references which another uses. That is why the evolution of foreign cultures remains imperceptible to us. So these changes become as if non-existent.

The attitude is tenable. But it certainly forbids the author to affirm that, in the realm of the relationship between the physical and the moral, the East and the Far East are "several thousand years ahead" of the West because they have to their credit "the great theoretical and practical *summae* represented by yoga in India, the Chinese breath techniques, or the visceral control of the ancient Maoris." It is not a question of evaluating the merits of yoga, Chinese breath techniques, or visceral control. They are all probably admirable. Nevertheless, the fact remains that M. Lévi-Strauss, by his critique of "false evolutionism," has just withdrawn from himself the right to speak of one culture as several thousand years ahead of another. If he prohibits the procedure in one direction he ought not to make use of it in the other.

Likewise, when he affirms at the end of one chapter: "Progress thus never represents anything more than the maximum progress in a given direction, pre-determined by the interests of the observer," he forces the reader to ask himself what objective value he can still attribute to the kind of judgment he will find exactly two pages further on: "There can be no more striking examples of

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regression than the descent from the peak of Lavallois culture to the mediocrity of the Mousterian civilisation, or from the splendour of the Aurignacian and Solutrian cultures to the rudeness of Magdalenian and to the extreme contrasts we find in the various aspects of mesolithic culture."

In the same way, it is a far too summary procedure to present as parallel the attitude of the natives of the Antilles who, some years after the discovery of America, submerged white prisoners in tanks of water to ascertain whether their bodies were subject to putrefaction, and the action of the Spaniards in sending out commissions to decide whether the Americans possessed souls. In the first place, there is a difference between sending commissions and submerging prisoners. Furthermore, the question is misplaced. It occurs in a section, otherwise excellent, in which M. Lévi-Strauss rightly denounces the natural *penchant* of men for considering cultural forms different from their own as grotesque, ridiculous, and barbarous. He points out that this is precisely one of the most remarkable characteristics of the mentality of—"savages"!

ALMOST everywhere, and for a very long time, humanity ended at the frontiers of the tribe, sometimes of the village. Here lived The good, The excellent, The complete, in short, The human, while all around prowled The bad. The contrast between this attitude and that of M. Lévi-Strauss is a wonderful illustration of the originality and value of ethnology and should be credited by him to the civilisation which has been able to produce it. Faithful, however, to his preconceptions, he does no such thing. Rather, he takes advantage of it to set the Spaniards and their commissions of inquiry side by side with the Caribs and their immersion of prisoners. Now, the institution of commissions of inquiry represents at least a less rudimentary kind of investigation procedure. But what is more, the question the Spaniards were asking was singularly grave. It was not, in my opinion, quite assimilable to the spontaneous reaction which leads any so-called primitive tribe to refuse humanity to its neighbours.

Indeed, only two choices were possible: either to decide that the Americans had no souls, in which case it became possible to hunt them like wild animals or work them like domesticated beasts (which the Spaniards, in fact, did); or else agree that they had souls, in which case it followed that for fifteen centuries, that is, until the arrival of missionaries able to baptise them, millions of innocents had been damned by a God of goodness and mercy, who did not even trouble himself to allow them the possibility of being evangelised. The quarrel, one sees, was important. It lasted a long time and troubled eminent minds. If I remember rightly, the Jansenists of the 17th century still held for the damnation of the Americans although the Church had already found what it regarded as a satisfactory solution to the dilemma.

There is a certain disproportion about assimilating such debates to the immersion of prisoners by the Caribs. It is possible, of course, that there was also some theological preoccupation involved in the case of the latter. If they had really been persuaded that the white invaders were beasts, they would not have doubted the decomposition of their bodies. Perhaps they believed them to be gods, and wished to make sure. But, in any case, what is involved is certainly a much cruder metaphysics.

As for the principal thesis, namely, that it smacks of a remnant of barbarism to call everything foreign barbarous, M. Lévi-Strauss would have better defended it by not pushing it to an extreme. Certainly, he does it no service by concluding that "the barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism." Such a sentence leads to nothing less than making Greeks and the Chinese the barbarians *par excellence*, in the measure in which they defined themselves as civilised by reference to a surrounding "barbarism."

IS IT true that all the peoples of the world have brought the same ingenuity to the production of equally valuable inventions, and that the West is not justified in priding itself on some superiority in this domain,

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even if it does so with too much complacency? Not that the different peoples are not equally gifted, but they seem to have made a very unequal investment of effort and reflection in the sphere of rigorous investigation. It is only natural that a more tenacious curiosity and methodical patience, a greater will to coherence and objectivity, should have brought greater results. Moreover, as M. Lévi-Strauss somewhere acknowledges, discoveries which do not take their place in a whole do not make a civilisation. Long ago, in order to praise the Chinese, it became the custom to dwell on the fact that they invented gunpowder before the Europeans. And, to top things off, it was sometimes added that, wiser than we, the Chinese used it only for fireworks. This last detail is, by the way, false: the Chinese hastened to make use of Western cannon as soon as they were acquainted with them. It does not matter: the grandeur of their civilisation has no need of an invention like that of gunpowder, and has, moreover, nothing to do with it. It has other merits, considerably more estimable. As for the invention of gunpowder, in itself it means nothing unless at the same time ways are sought, and found, to contain, direct, and utilise the explosion, that is to say, unless the cannon is also invented. But the cannon is the first explosive engine. It thus takes its place in a long line of inventions and theoretical investigations which, for their part, do have meaning, and share in fixing the fundamental ambitions of a culture. The ambitions of Chinese civilisation undoubtedly excluded this kind of preoccupation, and so the Chinese were condemned to invent gunpowder without the guns.

Under these circumstances, it does not seem very reasonable to attribute the prosperity of civilisations to chance, to a series of lucky accidents. Is it possible to believe that it was only for lack of one more lucky accident that the Chinese halted before the invention of the cannon, that the Mexicans did not pass from the wheel to the chariot? In reality, it was the context that was lacking. Chance does not operate alone. There are also internal factors which act to separate the candidates. And first in rank among these are the techniques of research and the will to invention—the twin forces of reason and scientific ambition.

Exchanges and borrowing are not the least decisive source of progress. But the differences in the capacity for assimilation of the various cultures soon impose considerable inequalities. There are open civilisations and closed ones. The latter repudiate all gifts. With the former, on the other hand, there comes into play a sort of insatiable voracity which multiplies and capitalises on its chances. It impels them to seize occasions, to profit by them, to pursue them, while the others disdain or reject them. Moreover, there exist "thresholds," like the invention of writing, which permits the safe transmission of acquired knowledge, or like printing, which permits its wide diffusion. Each new stage modifies the conditions of discovery. It is no longer a question of an arithmetical accumulation of happy accidents; the rôle of chance diminishes steadily. It is not to roulette or dice that one should appeal to explain the rising curve of a civilisation. Another game furnishes a better image, the jigsaw puzzle, in which the placing of the first pieces is slow and difficult, but becomes quicker and easier as the picture takes shape until at last the placing of the last pieces becomes instantaneous and inevitable. Civilisation is not a picture to reconstruct, it is a heritage which is unceasingly enriched. But one can observe a continuous acceleration of the rhythm of this enrichment, due to the fact that the means set in motion are more and more powerful, and that interacting with each other they multiply their strength. Once a certain speed has been acquired the progression becomes almost dizzying.

If, for my part, I were asked to name the chief superiority, and possibly the one incontestable superiority, of Western civilisation, I would answer without hesitation that it is finally to have produced ethnologists. There are no Bantu ethnologists, or, if they exist, they have studied at Cambridge or at Jena. A Parisian scholar has lavished praises on the theology of an African tribe, of which he

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makes a systematic and striking exposition. But I am not much astonished by theodicies; if I admire their skilful architecture, I still think them easier to construct than a physical or mathematical theory. The attributes of the gods offer less resistance to speculation than the laws of thermodynamics.

The rejection of the West by its intellectuals and scholars preceded the study of other civilisations and inspired it. What counts, what is primary and irreducible, outside every attempt at considered evaluation as it is outside all objective inquiry, is the passionate conviction that the civilisation to which one belongs is hypocritical, corrupt, and loathsome, and that it is necessary to look elsewhere, anywhere else, and preferably at its geographical and cultural antipodes, for the purity and plenitude which is felt to be lacking.

I was fourteen or fifteen years old when a friend put into my hands the first volumes of Lévy-Bruhl, and explained to me that all Western logic was condemned to sterility, since it was based on the principle of contradiction, A is A, which could obviously create nothing new, while on the contrary the "logic of participation," as it was known to the primitive mentality, justified every hope. The argument seemed unanswerable. I did not know then that logic never serves to create, that it is on the contrary a sort of insurance that the reasoner takes out against too-easy reasoning. It did not occur to me that the logic of participation, precisely because of its immense suppleness, was no logic at all, and that for this reason the primitive mentality was incapable of any rigorous thought whatsoever.

Like all the others, Western civilisation will finish its time and fulfil its destiny. Has the hour now struck for it to stand aside? It is possible that the illusions in reverse that I have just enumerated are the harbingers of such an hour. Illusions are ordinarily the produce of light-headedness or optimism. They comfort, they give hope and courage and assurance. Sometimes they stimulate fruitful action. But these are of a curious nature; they are the very opposite of flattering.

One would say that their authors, who are also their victims, have created them deliberately, often against the weight of the evidence and almost always contrary to good sense, in order to depreciate themselves and to convince themselves that the civilisation to which they belong possesses neither the excellence, nor the merits, nor the virtues on which it likes to pride itself. It is a generous sentiment which thus leads to exalting others at one's own expense. It does not have much to do with science, whose goal is not to be magnanimous but to be exact. Nevertheless, it singularly increases the stature of the world which has given it birth. It completes the work of that world. Perhaps it constitutes its highest lesson. The West has not only unified the planet and its history; it has not only linked all its civilisations by the progress of its technology, by its commerce, its conquests, and its wars—it has invented archæology, ethnology, and museums.

Here is an originality that the visitors of museums, the archæologists and ethnologists, would find it hard to deny. For they would have no inkling of all the various superiorities they have suddenly recognised in the most disinherited groups, the best-buried cultures, if they were members of these obscure tribes, if they had been citizens of these dead cities. They would be without any means of comparison. They would lack the necessary information to proceed to that universal appreciation toward which they strive. What is more, the idea would never occur to them, and if it did they would have no taste for it. Without museums and libraries they would have been persuaded of the absolute superiority of their culture, feeling neither sympathy nor respect nor admiration—in most cases not even curiosity—for that of their neighbours. But their injustice to their own civilisation—our Western one—is such that they forget that, up to the present, it is the only one which has produced the material and spiritual conditions for their own researches: the only one which permits and creates the conditions for their ingratitude.

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Three Poems by Kingsley Amis

A SONG OF EXPERIENCE

A QUIET start: the tavern, our small party,
A dark-eyed traveller drinking on his own;
We asked him over when the talk turned hearty,
And let him tell of women he had known.

He tried all colours, white and black and coffee;
Though quite a few were chary, more were bold;
Some took it like the host, some like a toffee;
The two or three who wept were soon consoled.

For seven long years his fancies were tormented
By one he often wheedled, but in vain;
At last, oh Christ in heaven, she consented,
And the next day he journeyed on again.

The inaccessible he laid a hand on,
The heated he refreshed, the cold he warmed;
What Blake presaged, what Lawrence took a stand on,
What Yeats locked up in fable, he performed.

And so he knew, where we can only fumble,
Wildly in daydreams, vulgarly in art;
Miles past the point where all delusions crumble
He found the female and the human heart.

Then love was velvet on a hand of iron
That wrenched the panting lover from his aim;
Lion rose up as lamb and lamb as lion,
Nausicaa and Circe were the same.

What counter-images, what cold abstraction
Could start to quench that living element,
The flash of prophecy, the glare of action?
—He drained his liquor, paid his score and went.

I saw him, brisk in May, in Juliet's weather,
Hitch up the trousers of his long-tailed suit,
Polish his windscreen with a chamois-leather,
And stow his case of samples in the boot.

GULLS

A dozen gulls from the seashore
Across the road swim on a pool
Of rain spilt on the meadow's floor,

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And, being off-white, rearrange
Meadow as barnyard, pool as pond,
Themselves as ducks, and this exchange

At first seems meant to entertain,
Merely to fool, or criticise
The sort to whom rain must be rain,

Gulls gulls; or is this hinted at:
No fake is fake—there is no *this*
Less this just for not being *that?*

THEY ONLY MOVE

They only move who travel far.
So whisk me off down roads unsigned
And take me where the good times are.

Shoot past the dance-hall and the bar:
All muffled contact must be blind.
They only move who travel far.

Borsch, pâté, filthy caviare
Say I've respectfully declined,
And take me where the good times are.

The social round—Martell, cigar,
Talk about talk—is social grind.
They only move who travel far.

Instal me dozing in the car,
Wined, dined, but still unconcubined,
And take me where the good times are.

Lush pastures of the cinema
Will be demanded, once defined.
They only move who travel far.

Fear-indigestion, guilt-catarrh,
If these exist, leave them behind,
And take me where the good times are.

Tell me, will movement make or mar?
Then root my body, tell my mind
They only move, who travel far
And take me where the good times are.

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The End of Forced Labour?

THE SILENT REFORM: *Alfred Burmeister*

ON SEPTEMBER 18TH last, the Soviet government announced, for the first time in decades, an amnesty for a large category of political prisoners. (The amnesty granted after Stalin's death covered "political crimes" only in cases where the sentence did not exceed five years of forced labour, and therefore only applied to an exceedingly small number of "politicals.") Under the new decree, all those who were sentenced for "collaboration with the Germans" to up to ten years of forced labour were to be released at once and their civic rights were to be restored; "collaborators" sentenced to more than ten years had their sentences reduced by half.

This new amnesty formed part and parcel of a penal reform which has been in progress for more than a year, and merely gives publicity to some of the changes which hitherto had, for whatever reason, gone on quietly.

Reports of this penal reform only began to reach the West last summer in the form of statements from returning prisoners of war. But a comparative study of these reports from camps in widely separated regions in the Soviet Far North, Far East, and Central Asia has established beyond doubt that the operative date for the reforms was everywhere the same—April 24th, 1954. The five unpublished decrees put into force on that date, together with the present amnesty for "collaborators," amount to a fundamental change in the penal system based on forced-labour camps and points to its gradual replacement by a comparatively "free" form of forced resettlement.

The unpublished decrees of April 1954 concern (1) a system for reducing forced-labour sentences in proportion to work performed; (2) the creation of legal tribunals in the camp area with power to revise sentences on application; (3) "conditional release" of all prisoners who have served two-thirds of

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There has been a great deal of discussion—most of it highly speculative—about the changes in the Soviet régime since Stalin's death. We believe these two articles, based on extensive interviews with recently released German and Japanese prisoners-of-war, provide us with authoritative information on the changes that have taken place in the system of forced labour. Alfred Burmeister, who lives in Munich, is himself a former inmate of a Siberian prison camp, having been released in the late forties. Herbert Passin is an American anthropologist, formerly on the faculty of Ohio State University, who has lived for most of the past eight years in Tokyo, where he has been engaged in a study of the agrarian problem and land reform in Japan. He speaks Japanese fluently, and was therefore able to interview personally many Japanese prisoners who have lately been set free. His co-author, Fritz van Briessen, has spent fifteen years in the Far East as a Foreign Correspondent.

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their sentence; (4) an amnesty for invalids; and (5) an amnesty for juveniles.

OF ALL these measures, the present amnesty for collaborators deals perhaps with the most widely-felt popular grievance, and had indeed been foreshadowed for some time in official propaganda through the press and even on the stage. The mass arrests of innocent people who had remained in the German-occupied parts of the U.S.S.R., which took place during the last year of the war and immediately afterwards, perturbed the population to such a degree that its faith in the régime was shaken for years. Nor had the Soviet people forgiven the secret police for the mass arrests and forced-labour sentences inflicted on Soviet soldiers returning from German prisoner of war camps. If Stalin's and Beria's successors wished to win the confidence of the population, they had to clean up that legacy; the subject of unjust sentences for alleged collaboration was openly discussed last year in several articles in the party periodical *Partinaya Zhizn* ("Party Life"), and forms the main theme of Korneychuk's play *The Wings*, which has been showing for months in more than one hundred theatres of the U.S.S.R. In practice, this measure makes comparatively little difference: the bulk of those now amnestied must have received their ten-year sentences for collaboration before 1948 (there were hardly any political sentences of less than twenty or twenty-five years afterwards), and would therefore have been nearly due for release anyhow.

Far more radical is the impact of the unpublished decrees of April 24th, 1954. The first of them reintroduces the so-called "*zachety*" ("settings-off") which had been normal practice in Soviet labour camps up to 1938. Under this system, any day on which the prisoner fulfils his "working norm" up to 100 per cent or more, counts for two or even three days of his sentence. Before the Yezhov period—the height of the great purges—it had become normal under this system that a penalty of eight years could be served in four; conversely, between 1938 and 1954, an eight-year sentence might mean many more years because, in place of the former reductions, arbitrary extensions of the sentences were introduced, e.g. "for the duration of the war" or even "until special order." Now the "*zachety*" are restored, and the directive appears in most cases to be to "set off" three days of the sentence for one day of norm-fulfilment.

For the mass of the camp inmates, this counting of three days for one is of immense importance; a general reduction of remaining sentences by two-thirds means that the majority of the present political prisoners will leave the camps within a few years. Even those who were sentenced to twenty or twenty-five years in 1949–50, during Stalin's last major wave of arrests, and who thus have still fourteen or nineteen years of their sentence before them, would find the remaining penalty reduced to four and a half or six years respectively by that measure alone. But that is not all. For under the new machinery introduced by the second of the April decrees, applications for revisions of the sentences are in most cases successful to the extent of a reduction by several years; while the third decree permits the "conditional release" of all prisoners who have served two-thirds of their sentence.

While the multiple counting of working days and the machinery of revision are of benefit chiefly for prisoners sentenced to twenty or twenty-five years, the "Two-Thirds-Decree" is particularly popular among those with ten or fifteen years' sentences—for it means in practice that they are released at once, having generally received their sentences before 1949. Finally, all juveniles who were less than eighteen years old at the time of their sentence are released from the camp without application to a tribunal of revision, though the camp managements apparently have power to transfer these released juveniles collectively to forced settlements for carrying out assigned labour under supervision. The aged and invalid prisoners come before special tribunals in the camp areas and are generally "conditionally released"; this means that they may be sent back to the

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camps by administrative order if they prove to be a bad political influence in their new surroundings.

THE total impact of these measures makes it evident that the Soviets have decided on a large-scale reduction in the economic scope of the forced-labour system, if not on its total abolition.

The first public hints that such a reform was in progress were given by the deputy minister of justice, Gorshenin, in *Pravda* of November 12th last year, and by the legal theorist Salikhov in the periodical *Gosudarstvo i Pravo* ("State and Law"), No. 6, 1954. Both mentioned the existence of "special decrees concerning the earlier release from camp of special categories of prisoners," but specified neither the categories to be released nor the date of the decrees. The point of these articles was not to explain these measures as such, but to emphasise that the releases should generally be decided by tribunals and that they should be conditional.

In fact, all the releases of political prisoners are "conditional" on the released prisoners further good conduct, and except for the aged and the invalids they are accompanied by the assignment to an area of resettlement and to a type of work. The released "politicals" do not receive a passport—which every Soviet citizen needs to circulate freely—but merely a *Komandirovka*, a travel order to one of the outlying areas for a similar type of heavy work to what they did in the camp—unless they are simply asked to stay on in the old area outside the barbed wire. They are rarely allowed to choose even whether they prefer to work in the gold mines of Kolyma, the coal pits of Vorkuta, or the copper mines of Kazakistan: assignment takes place according to the needs of the plan, and their only chance to influence the decision is by bribery. Bribes go not only to the camp chief, but to the camp doctor for a "favourable" diagnosis, to the MVD official in charge, on whose report the release may depend—and at the other end to the new "employer," the manager of a factory, state farm, or mine who is to hire the released prisoner.

The driving force behind the reform, then, is not just the humanitarianism of the new rulers, but the need to change the conditions of forced labour in response to the demands of a growing economy. I have the impression that the most effective pressure for penal reform was exercised by the employers of forced labour. The first great blow against the camp labour system was struck when it was decided—in the autumn of 1953—to remove the state enterprises in the camp areas from the administrative control of the MVD, and to hand them over to the economic ministries responsible for their respective branches of production. The managers of these enterprises had never been happy about the use of forced labour: they found it a nuisance to have to employ unwilling and correspondingly unproductive workers, and to be debited with full wage rates for their inferior work in their internal accounting with the camp administration. The fact that, moreover, the entire cost of the guards was charged to their accounts did nothing to reconcile them to the system. As soon as they were made independent of the MVD and had to justify their accounts by economic standards to their new quarters, they naturally rebelled. They said they would prefer to employ the healthy, well-fed guards and make them earn their living with honest work, instead of letting the work be done by the miserable, unfit, and unwilling forced labourers while paying the guards for doing nothing. The prisoners in turn said that they could work much better, even in the harsh climate of their remote areas, if only they were allowed to live there as free men and not behind barbed wire—and they underlined this demand by strikes, and in the last year even by open revolt.

Under this double pressure, reform started with the correction of the excesses of the last years of Stalin's régime. The bars before the windows fell; guards were no longer placed outside the huts at night; the eight-hour day, long demanded by the prisoners and supported by intelligent managers on grounds of efficiency, was at last made legal for all Soviet prisoners in the spring of 1954.

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And then the great transformation from forced-labour camps into forced settlements started. At Vorkuta, sixty per cent of the prisoners were released in the course of the past year. Emergency housing within the area was prepared for them at top speed. The virgin soil areas of Kazakistan, where forced labour could not be used and free labour was difficult to recruit, received masses of released prisoners as settlers. But industry, coal pits, and gold mines profited as well, for the forced settlers of today work with far more élan than the prisoners of yesterday. They want to let their families come to join them, or to found a family where they are. They want to have at last a flat of their own, a life of their own, and they need money for it; and they begin to like their work now that it is becoming the basis of a "real" life.

WHY did the Soviets realise only now what Marx stated a century ago—that slave labour is less productive, and therefore less profitable, than free labour? Stalin's natural bent toward terror was not the only reason. The truth is that compulsion was necessary to open up and settle in a few years remote areas like Kolyma, Vorkuta, and Karaganda. Not even the highest wages, the most alluring incentives would have made the new towns rise out of that inhospitable ground at the same pace as could be done by millions of slaves. Only prisoners could have been driven to the shores of the Arctic on foot, in order to build the railway across the tundra and to dig the coal pits; only on the bones of countless prisoners could the famous Kolyma road to the gold deposits be built in barely one decade; only after generations of prisoners had lived and died in miserable huts and tents did the foundations exist for building stone houses with central heating for "free" Soviet citizens.

Today the foundations are there. An industry has risen out of the steppes. The climate has not become more pleasant, nor the landscape more attractive; but living conditions are no longer very much worse than elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Today, then, it is possible to ask free workers and technicians to live in the Komi Autonomous Republic, or in Karaganda or Kolyma—and, on the other hand, the industry which has been built up requires free workers and not slaves for its efficient running. Conveyor belt and handcuffs, complicated machinery and unfree operators do not go well together; that a high level of the means of production requires a corresponding type of worker is another old Marxian truth which the Soviets have had occasion to remember.

In addition, there are the political advantages of these reforms for the successors of Stalin and Beria. Whether the prisoners' strikes made them first realise the limits of their power, or whether they were anyhow aware of the need to make concessions to popular discontent, the fact is that the terror has been toned down. Some of the recent returning prisoners of war report that they met no "politicals" in the transit prisons on their journey, nor did new political cases enter their camps during the last two years. Even if one assumes that the new political prisoners may be in special prisons, their number could not be as large as in former times. On the other hand, there are many new ordinary criminals in the camps; there is also no lack of new "economic offenders" who, after serving their sentence, are not allowed to go home but are assigned to the forced settlements, just like the "politicals."

Of course, there are limits to this political "thaw." There have been quiet individual rehabilitations of victims of the great 1937 purge, but no sign of an open revision of the monstrous trials of that time. There is an amnesty for Soviet citizens abroad, but only for those who collaborated with the Nazis—not for other political opponents of the Soviet system. Substantial as the reforms are, they do not touch the basis of the party dictatorship with its intolerance of any form of political dissidence. It remains to be seen how far the loosening of the terror machine will unwittingly contribute to the revival of a new opposition—and whether in that case the régime will react by a new tightening of the screws or by further concessions.

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THE STRIKE AT NORILSK: *Herbert Passin & Fritz van Briessen*

By this time, a great deal has come to be known about the strikes and uprisings that took place in forced-labour camps in Soviet Russia, following Stalin's death. The best known of the forced-labour camp uprisings is that of Vorkuta, the great mining complex within the Arctic Circle, which has been reported on by the Germans, Dr. Joseph Scholmer and Brigitte Gerland, and by the American, John Noble. Disturbances have also been reported, although in lesser detail, for other camps, such as Karaganda, by released European and American inmates. But the repatriation of Japanese prisoners from Russia, which has been going on in a slow, steady trickle, has both confirmed and supplemented these reports. Hundreds of Japanese had been inmates of camps where disorders took place, and their eyewitness accounts have revealed uprisings and strikes in other places that have not hitherto been reported in the West — Norilsk, Magadan, Tayshet, Kirgil (Karaganda), and Muika (Sakhalin). There is some evidence that this process has still not run its full course. As late as January of 1955, for example, a three-day strike took place in the Tayshet forced-labour camps.

Some of these actions have been part of a continuing chain reaction. A number of the Ukrainian leaders of the uprising in Norilsk, for example, seem to have been involved in an earlier disturbance in Karaganda, even before Stalin's death. And when a group of fifteen of the leaders of the Norilsk uprising — again Ukrainians — were transferred to Tayshet in May 1954, they there became the centre of a new resistance movement which culminated in a strike over the clothing ration.

The strike that took place in the Far North mining complex of Norilsk began on May 7th, 1953—two months after Stalin's death—and lasted until August 11th, 1953, or about one hundred days in all. This means that it started more than a month before the June 17th uprising in East Berlin and more than two months before the uprising in Vorkuta, and continued after the Vorkuta strike was over. The strike spread from camp to camp within the complex and was temporarily halted by armed suppression on the night of May 23rd, 1953. But it was brought to its final conclusion only after a massacre on the night of August 11th, 1953, when it is estimated that hundreds of prisoners were killed or wounded. Several Japanese prisoners were direct participants in, and eyewitnesses of, these events.

Norilsk is located in the Arctic Circle at 69° 20′ north latitude and 88° 6′ east longitude, near the mouth of the Yenisei River at the north-western corner of the Siberian plateau. It is the centre of an industrial and administrative complex (or Kombinat), which spreads eastward to the Wariyok River (about 20 km.), westward to Dudinka, an Arctic port on the Yenisei (about 200 km.), and northward to the shore of Wariyok Lake (about 100 km.). The area is rich in mineral resources, and its non-ferrous metal production and chemical works are combined into an intricate industrial system which is — except for food—practically self-supporting.

Norilsk, like Vorkuta, was developed primarily by forced labour. The area had been known even during Czarist times, but it was not systematically explored until an expedition went there in 1923. The real development began, however, in the 1930's. The construction of the railroad between Wariyok and Norilsk was started in 1935. Another narrow-gauge railroad was built between the mouth of the Yenisei and Dudinka. With the end of World War II, Norilsk's development made an enormous spurt. In 1946, it was still administratively a "village," a mining community of 50,000 people. Seven years later, when it was elevated administratively to the status of a "city," it had an area more than ten times its earlier size and a population of over 300,000.

The major towns of the region are Norilsk,

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the headquarters, with about 300,000 people (excluding troops and prisoners), and Dudinka, the port of Norilsk at the mouth of the Yenisei, with somewhat more than 40,000 inhabitants. Along the railroad between Norilsk and Dudinka are only a few small villages. Supplies come into Norilsk by rail from Dudinka where they arrive by the Arctic Ocean route from Archangelsk and Murmansk, or down the Yenisei River from Krasnoyarsk. Small quantities also come by air. The Dudinka warehouses therefore store a whole year's supplies during the four-months' open season. A railway line between Krasnoyarsk and Dudinka was started in 1950, but construction was suspended in 1952. In view of the critical importance of transportation for increasing the production of the Norilsk Kombinat, it may be expected that the railroad construction will start again soon.

There has been much speculation about why so much effort is going into the development of the Norilsk Kombinat in spite of its great distance from the centres of Russian life and the harshness of its living and working conditions. Whatever other reasons there may have been, the principal one seems to be its unusual richness in rare metals and minerals. The Norilsk region contains nickel, copper, cobalt, platinum, gold, iron, coal, clay, and gypsum. In many cases the ore is a mixture of several metal-bearing minerals and therefore must be sorted out or treated in several smelting processes. An extremely rich ore containing copper, nickel, cobalt, platinum, and gold is found on the plateau south of Norilsk. Coal of very good quality is mined nearby. Clay and gypsum are found close to the surface. About 100 km. northeast of Norilsk there are iron, copper, and gold deposits, whose exploitation started after 1950. The iron deposits are especially noteworthy because they may make possible the expansion of the Kombinat into heavy or machine industry, which was lacking in 1953.

The most important metal found, however, is nickel, and the Norilsk deposit may be the richest in all Russia. In 1953, of the more than thirty small and large industrial plants in Norilsk, the nickel works was the biggest and most important. It consists of a mixing plant, a smelting mill, an ore warehouse, an electrolytical refining plant, a machine repair shop, and a small smelting plant. It is the oldest factory in Norilsk, and it has been enlarged and reorganised several times since World War II. Its electrolytical plant contains 320 refining tanks, which permits us to estimate an output of about 400–500 tons of nickel plate per day.

From the reports of the prisoners, there is reason to believe that Norilsk plays a very important part in the Soviet economy. In addition to its coal production, which seems to be used mainly for local industries, it seems to produce in the neighbourhood of 180,000 tons of nickel, 50,000 tons of copper, and 100 tons of cobalt per year. In all of these operations, except for several "secret" plants, whose products are unidentified, prisoner and ex-prisoner labour has been the main source of manpower.

NORILSK is an example of a sociological form that is unique to Soviet Asia —a prisoner's city. Since living conditions are so hard, it is very difficult to get ordinary labourers to come in large numbers without extraordinary inducements. In order to develop the region quickly, therefore, the Soviets resorted to forced labour. The labour force for the development of the resources of the far north was provided in the first instance by prisoners, both criminal and political. Furthermore, prisoners who had completed their terms were released only on condition that they remained in the area as "free labourers"; they were unable to secure permits to live elsewhere. In the past few years, however, contract labourers have been brought into Norilsk, attracted by high material inducements, and by the summer of 1953, when the events with which this report is concerned took place, they totalled about 20% of the population. Japanese returnees report that a large proportion of these immigrants are women from rural areas who are attracted by the good wages and by the pros-

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pects of finding a husband in the penal areas, where the ratio of men to women is extremely favourable. By the time of the uprisings in 1953, then, Norilsk's population of 300–400,000 was a complex mixture of persons of many nationalities, both Soviet and non-Soviet, and of many types—common criminals, political prisoners, paroled prisoners, freed common criminals, freed political prisoners, free labourers, soldiers, MVD personnel, and government officials. In this mixture, men outnumbered women by as much as four to one, and prisoners or ex-prisoners made up at least 70% of the population of Norilsk.

The great majority of the prisoners were Ukrainians, many of whom had been involved in one or another of the continuing Ukrainian resistance movements against the Russians: the collectivisation period, 1936–7, the War. They were numerous among the criminal prisoners as well as among the politicals, among the free labourers as well as among the guards. The other principal nationalities, according to the Japanese observers, were Georgians, Baltic peoples (Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians)—the last president of Latvia was reported a prisoner in Norilsk—Germans (both Volga and German Germans), Chinese, Poles, Crimean Tartars, Chechen-Ingush, and Jews. Many other nationalities, both from within and from without the Soviet Union, were also represented in smaller numbers, including Afghans, Italians, Spaniards, and gypsies. One Japanese who had spent many years in an "invalid *lager*" said that he once counted thirty-two different nationalities in his own camp.

The population seems to have been growing steadily until 1953, with new accretions of prisoners coming in, and released prisoners going out to become "free labourers" in the town. But the prison population gradually went down from the 140,000 of 1947 to about 100,000 by the time of the first post-Stalin amnesty of March 27th, 1953. The amnesty further reduced this number to about 50,000. However, the prisoners freed by the first amnesty were mainly criminals, not politicals. This, as it turns out later, was one of the main grievances of the striking prison-camp inmates.

IN THE months that followed Stalin's death, there was a great deal of unrest in the camps. People felt this was some kind of turning-point, and that it could not help but be for the better. Signs of relaxation were multiplying daily from Moscow. The new Malenkov-Beria policy opened exciting prospects. But, as has been observed, the first amnesty announced by the post-Stalin régime on March 27th was a bitter disappointment to the political prisoners: it applied only to criminals. This, together with the usual grievances of life in the camps, made the atmosphere very tense.

Spez Lager 5, where the strike broke out, is in the northern part of Norilsk, just east of the new city development, the *Golstroy*. Two other political camps, No. 6, which is for women, and No. 4, are nearby. No. 5 is about 300 metres long and about 100 metres wide. At its south-eastern end, it rounds off into a semicircle of about 50 metres. At the time the strike broke out, there were several thousand inmates, including several hundred non-Soviet foreigners, such as Japanese, Hungarians, Koreans, Chinese, Germans, Czechs, and Italians. As in most of the other political camps around there, the largest national group was the Ukrainians. But No. 5 had something more: several score Ukrainians who had been involved in some disturbance in the forced-labour camps of Karaganda in 1952 and had been transferred to Norilsk only lately. These seemed to form an important focus of the strike, providing it with leadership and boldness. One night shortly after their arrival, for example, four prisoners known to be spies for the administration were killed. The killers were never apprehended. What is even more remarkable is that they were killed with a mattock, which suggests that there must have been some collaboration on the part of the guards. Every incoming prisoner was subjected to a rigorous gate check, and tools were by regulation returned to the custody of the guards.

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Therefore extremely skilful organisation or collaboration would be necessary to smuggle something as large and conspicuous as a work mattock into the camp. This affair achieved several important purposes. It weakened the administration's control of camp affairs. It frightened administration supporters and agents. And it impressed the prisoners with the determination and effectiveness of the Ukrainians, disposing them to follow their leadership.

At the time of the strike, the main work of Camp 5 was the construction of a six-storey building nearby. This work was being done together with Camps 4 and 6 (the women's camp). Camp 5 is surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence, the outer about 4 metres high and the inner about 1·7 metres high. The south-western stretch of wire gives on the brick factory. Sentries patrolled the space between the inner and the outer barbed wires, the *zaprétnaya zóna*, or forbidden zone.

Because they worked together on the same project, and also because they were fellow-Ukrainians, there was a good deal of contact between the men of Camp 5 and the women. They communicated regularly by means of notes wrapped around stones to which a string would be tied and by this thrown across. This was, of course, forbidden, but the guards were not too strict about it.

At midday on May 7th, several prisoners were throwing notes across to some women who were in the brick factory. Occasionally one of the women's notes would not carry the full distance across, falling in the *zaprétnaya zóna*. The men created a disturbance reaching their arms or poking sticks through the fence, and one of the sentries ordered them to move back. Several prisoners paid no attention to this order and continued leisurely as before. At that point, a guard who was new to the camp walked down the space between the two barbed-wire fences. Normally these guards were unarmed, but on that occasion he was carrying a pistol. Just as he approached the centre of the disturbance, a prisoner pushed out a stick to rake in a note for which he had been reaching. The guard drew his pistol and fired, wounding him in the arm.

A crowd of prisoners immediately gathered around in anger, whereupon the sentry fired his pistol several times into the air. When they refused to disperse, he aimed at the ground and fired once again. This time another prisoner was wounded slightly in the finger. With this, the prisoners dispersed.

THE shootings stirred up a strange and reckless mood among the prisoners. According to regulations, the sentry may shoot at people between the inner and the outer barbed wire, but he may not shoot inside the camp itself. The prisoners argued that since the wounded man had been inside, the sentry had no right to shoot him. The guards argued that since his hand was outside, they did have the right to shoot him.

With the wounded at their head, a group of prisoners trooped over to the camp director's office, demanding that the sentry be brought to trial. According to a Japanese eyewitness, the conversation went something as follows:

Director: The sentry did not shoot into the camp. You fellows are wrong about that.

Prisoners: We're not wrong. You can see for yourself that he's wounded.

Director: Just take him to the hospital and they'll take care of him there.

Prisoners: We may be prisoners, but we have some rights.

Director: You fellows are just excited. We'll talk it over tomorrow when you're a little calmer. That's all for today.

The prisoners were angry and dissatisfied, but they dispersed.

The following day, May 8th, the day shift went out to work on its construction project as usual. But the assignments by the brigade chiefs, themselves prisoners, were not clear, so the day shift idled around, not getting much work done. The prisoners began to feel that some firm hand had taken charge and that perhaps the brigade chiefs were

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under instructions to "slow down." The same thing happened again on May 9th. Then, on that evening, the night shift started a sit-down strike and did not return to the camp the following morning. The day shift was therefore unable to go to work.

The sit-down strike on the construction project had an immediate effect on the day shift of Camp 4 as well. It returned home and announced that it was starting a strike in sympathy with the night shift of Camp 5.

Back in Camp 5, the rumour spread that the strike had expanded to Camp 10 and the women's *lager* (No. 6) as well. The atmosphere was electric. Among many of the political prisoners, who had spent much of their lives in revolutionary struggles, the word "strike" stirred deep and sensitive layers of memory and consciousness. There were any number of former Communists, socialists, trade unionists, peasant leaders, and student leaders in the camps, and the idea of a strike both thrilled and frightened them.

The night shift had run up a black flag, made of mattress ticking, on the building where they were holding out. Black flags made their appearance in Camp 4 also.

The camp administration seemed somewhat uncertain about what to do, but finally food was brought into Camp 5, and meals were served as usual. In Camp 4, however, food was not served, whether because the administration refused to bring it in or the strike leaders decided not to accept it is not clear. In any event, the prisoners of Camp 4 went without food for three days.

FINALLY, on the morning of May 12th, after three days of sit-down, the No. 5 night shift returned to camp. One of the guards tried to hurry the day shift out to work, but at that the prisoners balked, and a new feeling seemed to take hold of them. Therefore, about 9 a.m., the commandant announced over the loudspeaker that "sabotage"—which included refusal to work—would be punished by three years extension of term. "Go to work immediately!" the loudspeaker warned. But the prisoners gave no response. A group of prisoners approached the commandant near his office and demanded that someone be sent from "Moscow" to discuss their grievances. "You don't have the authority," they said, "Send Malenkov!" Whether by instinct or by shrewd organisation, the prisoners all shouted in unison so that no single person could be picked out as leader or spokesman.

The threat of a three-year extension did not disturb the twenty-five-year prisoners. but those with eight- or ten-year sentences that were drawing to a close became very fearful of reprisals. (Some of the Japanese prisoners began to think of how to get out of the camps so as not to get too involved.)

On May 13th a high officer of the Norilsk Kombinat, believed by the prisoners to be its chief, arrived to look into the situation. He was, however, unable to resolve the problem, and so the same evening a general from Krasnoyarsk flew in, believed by the prisoners to be a Major-General Panikoff, Chief of the Yenisei Stroy, with headquarters in Krasnoyarsk. A desk was set up in front of the mail-room, and the general's aide spoke to the prisoners for him, the general himself saying nothing. But the prisoners made so much noise that it was impossible to carry on the discussion. "It's no use talking to you. You don't have the authority. We want to talk to someone from Moscow." The only reply the prisoners were able to get was, "No higher official will come. If you don't stop the strike immediately, you will get a three-year extension of sentence." The same experience was repeated in Camp 4.

On the following day, a high officer of the MVD, described among the prisoners as "Beria's assistant," with the rank of major-general, flew in from Moscow to undertake negotiations. He asked the prisoners to have their "representatives" prepare a petition of grievances. This placed the strikers in a difficult position. Although nobody was entirely clear who the leaders might be, nobody wanted to expose them to possible reprisals. A young Ukrainian stepped forward from the crowd of pushing prisoners to offer himself. "Beria's assistant" refused to negotiate

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unless the "representatives" came forward. A quick conference among the prisoners led to the designation of seven or eight persons as "explainers," not as "representatives" or "leaders." "Beria's assistant" accepted this group to negotiate with.

The MVD man made an extremely favourable impression on the prisoners by his forthrightness and friendliness. In the words of one of the Japanese prisoners, he was "a man of middle height, about forty-five years of age, wearing glasses, very pleasant, with a friendly way of speaking." One of the "explainer" group was himself a former Party member from Moscow and seemed to be an acquaintance of "Beria's assistant."

A list of grievances had been prepared by the strike leadership and it was handed over. These were formulated in a secret session of the leadership, and the ordinary prisoners neither participated nor had an opportunity to express approval or disapproval. However, when they learned the demands, they were extremely pleased and proud. The following demands were made:

1. Application of the amnesty to the political prisoners.
2. Better food rations.
3. An eight-hour working day. (At that time the working day was ten hours, and counting travelling time, twelve hours.)
4. Better cultural facilities for the prisoners with fifteen- to twenty-five-year sentences. ("The improvement of our knowledge is important also for the construction of the Soviet Union," they argued.)
5. Transfer from Norilsk to some less harsh climate; or else more suitable work in Norilsk itself.
6. Elimination of the disparities in working conditions between the different workplaces.
7. An absolute end to discrimination against national minorities.
8. Transfer of the camp commandant.
9. A rigid accounting of the Kombinat books. (The charge was that the "camp officials are middle-men who exploit our labour.")
10. Removal of the identification numbers on clothing.
11. An increase in the amount of money they could send home.
12. No locking of the barracks at night.
13. No reprisals.

The MVD man was extremely conciliatory.

On May 15th an announcement was posted on the bulletin board in front of the dining-hall to the effect that "The complaints and demands will be investigated and action taken immediately. In the meantime, go back to work." The word thereupon went around to end the strike and await the outcome of the investigation.

In Camp 4 a similar conference took place. The MVD man impressed the prisoners favourably with his sincerity, and so the strike was called off there too.

But within a few days the prisoners began to feel that the authorities were not playing fair. As day after day passed, the administration gave no clear answer to the demands they had submitted to Beria's assistant. There were also a series of moves that made the prisoners suspicious.

On May 19th several hundred foreign prisoners, including most of the Japanese, were transferred to barracks in the semi-circular south-eastern tip of the camp. They were told that as a result of the amnesty following Stalin's death, foreign prisoners would soon be sent home, and that this transfer was a preliminary. The foreign prisoners were, however, very suspicious of this explanation.

Then on the following day, May 20th, a major shift took place. About half of the prisoners were transferred out of Camp 5, some to Camp 4 and some to a new camp about 2 km. south that was still under construction and had received as yet no number. The feeling among the prisoners was that this was a trick to isolate the leaders, or to separate the tough from the weak prisoners, or to reduce the numbers of prisoners in Camp 5, or to divide them into groups of

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manageable size. In any event, the prisoners saw the transfer as an ominous move. It looked like a violation of their demand that there be no reprisals and a preliminary to some drastic action.

There were no Japanese prisoners in the group that was transferred, so its fate is not entirely clear to us. From their position in the new barracks, however, the Japanese prisoners heard the firing of machine-guns pushing the group along. The firing was also heard by the prisoners in Camp 4. It was not clear what provoked the firing nor whether any prisoners were killed or wounded, but the rumour spread both in Camp 5 and in Camp 4 that several dozens had been hurt. The general belief was that the intransigent Ukrainian leaders were being separated out for isolation, punishment, or even worse. The firing suggested that they were being shot right then and there. A similar separation was taking place in the other camps that had been on strike.

On the following day the resentment of the remaining prisoners of Camp 5 broke out in another strike. Whether in response to the same conditions or as a result of good communications or organisation, the strike recommenced in Camp 4 as well.

Just past midnight—that is, early in the morning of May 22nd—a fire truck entered the camp and pulled up alongside a water main near the camp bakery. At that, one of the guards started to bolt a barrack's door. However, some prisoners who were not yet fully asleep overheard this and woke up the others. Suspecting that this was a move to isolate the barracks from contact with each other in order to gain more complete control of the camp, they were thoroughly aroused, and breaking open the windows, went around smashing the locks on the other barracks and calling the prisoners to come out. Then a group of prisoners attacked the truck. The driver, in alarm, turned about and made straight for the gate, injuring a prisoner as he did so.

The prisoners were in a state of great excitement, and they took over full control of the camp. They kept the guards out, and refused to pay attention to the administration. Orders passed around organising camp activities, but nobody pried into the question of where they came from.

All day on May 22nd the excitement continued, with the prisoners in firm control and doing their own policing. All day long the camp loudspeaker announced: "High officials from Moscow are on their way. If the strike continues, you will be firmly suppressed."

On the evening of the 22nd, about a platoon of Red Army troops marched into the camp through the main gate. A group of prisoners who were near the commandant's office went over to meet them near the eastern edge of the warehouse, and started a discussion. The argument became heated, the officer in charge alternating between conciliation and threats.

The officer warned, "If you come any closer, we shoot," at the same time firing his pistol into the sky. This seemed to be a signal for the guards to open fire. The prisoners flopped to the ground, and the officer backed off. When the prisoners suddenly realised that the firing was only a threat, they grabbed bricks and sticks and went for the officers, pushing them in front of the store. At this, support fire commenced, the angle of fire being at about the level of the second storey. The prisoners then withdrew to the front of the drying-room, and the officer passed out of the gate under cover.

The prisoners, still excited, stayed where they were in front of the drying-room, and the loudspeaker again gave the order to disperse. When there was no response, firing began for the third time, but this time the angle of fire was lower and the prisoners dispersed quickly.

The following day, the 23rd, the loudspeaker kept up a running barrage of announcements all day: "Go back to work! If you don't, drastic measures will be taken." By nightfall the prisoners had still not responded. So the authorities began the deployment of force to take over control of the camp.

Soldiers deployed around the camp. The

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rear entrance was blocked off. With these arrangements made, negotiations between the authorities and the prisoners recommenced. When the prisoners refused to submit, a company of troops entered through both the front and the back gates, forming a semicircle as they advanced. The prisoners were pressed on to the road between the eastern tip of the warehouse and the bakery. The unit that was deployed in the direction of the hospital outside the barbed wire began firing above the prisoners. But this did not seem to be very effective. Then when the unit that came through the back gate had taken cover in the shadow of the buildings, the unit from the front gate opened fire straight into the crowd of prisoners. There were many casualties.

The prisoners seemed completely stunned by the point-blank fire and surrendered meekly, allowing themselves to be assembled near the camp jail.

The Japanese prisoners were not able to form a clear idea of the number of dead and wounded. One stated that he saw corpses littering the path all the way from the drying-room to the jail. Later on, seven or eight trucks came to remove the dead and wounded.

While these events had been taking place in Camp 5, strikes had broken out in other political camps in the Norilsk area as well. Most of these were of the character of sympathy strikes. The most important one seems to have been in Camp 3, where the strike lasted until August 11th. The prisoners of Camp 3 took over control of their camp, setting up barricades at the gates. As in Camp 5, there were futile conferences with the local high-ranking officers, including "General Panikoff" from the Yenisei Stroy, followed by the friendly conference with "Beria's assistant." The strike dragged on inconclusively, with no concessions to the strikers, but also no important repressive action. Food was not cut off, and no drastic suppression was resorted to. The prisoners operated the camp, and they continued to fly their black flag. Local townspeople, who were mainly former prisoners themselves, and prisoners from other camps demonstrated their solidarity by throwing food and cigarettes into Camp 3 as they passed by. The prisoners made up leaflets, which they flew into the wind on kites, stating their side of the case. Also, quite mysteriously, printed leaflets listing the strikers' demands began to appear in Norilsk town itself.

By August 11th, however, the authorities, having exhausted all other means, apparently resolved on drastic measures. At about 11 p.m. on that night, troops surrounded the camp and began firing into the compound. It went on sporadically until about 6 a.m. on the morning of the 12th, and was heard clearly in the town as well as in the camps. Japanese estimates place the number of casualties at about 1,500 killed and wounded out of a total camp population of about 2,500 prisoners. Emergency first aid and hospital mobilisation lasted for about three days.

With this, the disorders in Norilsk which had started on May 7th came to an end. They had lasted ninety-six days in all, starting before the Vorkuta and East Berlin uprisings, and continuing after these had ended.

ALTHOUGH the Norilsk strike was finally suppressed, the demands and grievances of the prisoners were met to some extent. As in the case of the Vorkuta and the East Berlin strikes, it remains for historians to unravel the complicated chains of cause and effect. Norilsk was an effect of the same general process that produced the strikes in other parts of the Soviet Empire, notably East Germany. The prisoners sensed a momentary "softness" in the régime, and they took advantage of it. At the same time, this became in its turn the cause of a further loosening-up.

In October 1953, Norilsk was changed in status to an ordinary city. Immigration and contact were opened up, and the city received a quota of deputies for election to the Supreme Soviet. Although the tendency remained as before to restrict released prisoners to the area, there was also a substantial influx of free workers under contract from all over the Soviet Union.

Many of the strike demands were met in one form or another, although not at the

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same time in all camps. A partial amnesty for political prisoners seems to have been in the making for some time. Even during the strike itself, preparations for the liberation of foreign political prisoners were started. Reports from Norilsk show that there has been a definite improvement in the living and working conditions of the camps. Regulations are more carefully observed, and much of the "intermediate exploitation" by the camp administration and minor officials—the bribery, graft, favouritism, falsification of records—has been eliminated. The commandant of Camp 5 was removed in accordance with the prisoners' demand (but he later turned up as commandant of another camp). There was a reduction in the amount of money withheld from wages for administrative expenses. Many of the embittering features of prison life, such as the identification numbers and the bolting of the barracks at night, were abolished, at least in most of the camps. There was a general increase in the small privileges. Prisoners were allowed more frequent contact with home. They were allowed to send and receive larger sums of money. There was also an immediate increase in wages. Where on the average the take-home pay had been between 80 and 90 rubles per month before the strike, it went up to about 200 after the strike.

Our story of Norilsk, however, must end at this point—the autumn of 1953—because our Japanese informants have all been removed to other camps or to Far East ports for shipment back to Japan.

In order to see what has happened since that time, we must now turn our attention to another forced-labour district in the Krasnoyarsk Republic, Tayshet. There we are able to find some more Japanese prisoners and we also pick up traces of the Ukrainians who took part in the leadership of the Norilsk strike.

THE coal-mining camps of Tayshet in the Krasnoyarsk region had heard nothing of the disturbances in Norilsk, nor indeed in any other part of the Soviet Union. But, as in the rest of the forced-labour world of Siberia, Stalin's death set off stirrings and rumblings in Tayshet too. The first rumour that made the rounds was that political prisoners were going to receive better treatment. The next was that Article 58 (the catch-all article on anti-state activities in the Soviet penal code; most political prisoners were sentenced under one or another of its numerous provisions) was going to be abolished and all the prisoners who had been convicted under it returned. Credibility was added to these rumours by small changes that began to show up about that time.

Although it had happened in many of the other camps some years before, Tayshet went over to a wage system only in the spring of 1953. Until that time, prisoners had received their pay in food—bread and *kasha*. Fulfilment of the norm brought 100 grammes of bread and 400 of *kasha*; 120% of the norm, twice as much of both. But under the new regulations, wages were paid in cash. A three-month transition period leading into the full operation of the new system was established. During this time, prisoners were allowed to draw advance payments upon request up to 100 rubles; an extra 100 rubles could be drawn upon special petition. After this transition period, all payments were to be made in cash. As in Norilsk, the sudden appearance of cash on a large scale brought on a rush of thievery, and many of the prisoners took to depositing their earnings with the administration for safe keeping. By the end of 1954, some prisoners had worked up accounts of more than 1,000 rubles, At about the same time, the food ration itself was improved, and a fairly well stocked store was opened. All of these developments added up to a real incentive for the prisoners to work. They could buy things with their money, and if they wanted more, they could earn it by working over the norm. By the end of 1953, prisoners were allowed to own watches and radios, which they could buy in the store, as personal property.

In the year 1954 the changes that had started after Stalin's death continued apace. In March of that year, barbed wire within the camps was removed. At the same time,

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the humiliating identification numbers on the clothing were removed. In April, the so-called *zachot* system was introduced. By over-fulfilling the norms, the prisoners were able to earn credits for the commutation of their sentence at the following rates:

NUMBER OF DAYS REDUCTION OF SENTENCE

	For One Day's Overfulfilment of the Norm by			
Type of Work	*Up to 5%*	*6–10%*	*11–20%*	*21% and over*
Inside camp, or light work	0·5	1·0	1·0	1·0
Work with machines	0·5	1·0	1·5	1·5
Heavy work (lumbering, etc.)	0·5	1·0	1·5	2·0

Then on April 26th it was announced that prisoners under the age of eighteen who had finished one-third of their term without incident would be released. All of these changes, coming in regular order after Stalin's death, seemed to confirm the prisoners' expectations.

But on May 5th, 1954, a new development took place. Fifteen Ukrainians who had taken a leading part in the Norilsk strike arrived in Camp 13. Their transfer was part of the policy of dispersal of the strike leadership. For the first time the Tayshet prisoners learned of the strike, and for the first time they met fellow prisoners who were not afraid to stand up to the administration. The camp authorities seemed somewhat afraid of the new arrivals, so for the first few months they did not assign them any heavy work. The Ukrainians excited the prisoners with their detailed stories about Norilsk. The moral of their story, they preached constantly, was that the prisoners should assert themselves and demand their rights. "Something new is happening in the Soviet Union," they argued. "Beria's day is over!" they would shout back at the guards, "Now *we* are the ones who respect the laws of the Soviet Union. Don't try to pull anything on us!" In very short order they took over control of Camp 13. Until then, the camp had been under the control of one of the criminal prisoners, but the Ukrainians organised the camp against him and one night gave him such a thorough beating that he was taken to the hospital and never showed up in Camp 13 again. At night the Ukrainians used to sit around singing Ukrainian songs. Their example of boldness and self-respect—and even more important, the fact that they could get away with it—stirred the Camp 13 prisoners deeply.

In the next few months, many changes began to make their appearance in Tayshet No. 13. They were of several kinds. First there were actual changes in the regulations governing living conditions, working conditions, and prison sentences. Then there were changes in the manner of execution of regulations. There had always been rules and regulations on the books for the protection of the prisoners, but they were often disregarded by camp officials. The regulations, for example, called for one day of rest per week; but if the camp officials wanted to meet some quota, then they disregarded this right of the prisoners and required them to work anyway. After the arrival of the Ukrainians in Camp 13, the regulations were meticulously observed. Another important change was the reduction of the "intermediate exploitation," which the prisoners particularly resented: having to bribe the work chief to receive credit for filling the norm, overcharges on "administrative expenses," and so on. There seems also to have been a real change in attitude on the part of the camp authorities; they showed much more respect not only for the rights of the prisoners but for their person as well. The prisoners also seemed to feel more self-confident and proud of themselves, and less inclined to submit humbly to official arrogance. It is also important that the prisoners found it possible to stand up to authority without fear of reprisals and in the full expectation that they could compel the authorities to accept some of their demands.

Let us look in a little more detail at the changes that took place in Tayshet No. 13 after the arrival of the Ukrainians. (The dates are those on which the changes actually reached this particular camp, not on which the policy change was made in Moscow.)

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Living Conditions:

June 1954. Japanese prisoners were allowed to correspond with their families in Japan. Other foreign prisoners had already received this privilege.

June 1954. The use of food-ration reduction as punishment was abolished. Until that time, prisoners who fulfilled less than 60% of the norm had had their rations reduced to 300 grammes of bread.

Midsummer 1954. There was a change in the behaviour and manner of the guards. When they used to line up the work brigades for the day, they would shout a routine series of warnings: "No talking on the line of march! Walk in the middle of the road! Don't look sideways! If you drop something, leave it; don't try to pick it up! No eating on the line of march! I shall shoot without warning!" After the change, this formula, customarily accompanied by much cursing and shouting, was reduced to the simple statement: "Don't try to escape or you will be shot."

August 1954. Family visits were permitted. This did not affect the foreign prisoners, but it was potentially a big boon to Russian prisoners whose families could afford the trip. A special guest house where the prisoners could meet their visitors was set up next to the gatehouse of Camp 13. The first beneficiary was a brigade leader with a good work record, who received a visit from his wife. He was given a three-day vacation without work, and then upon petition he received five more days of liberty after working hours. He was therefore able to spend eight days with his wife. Since at that time there were no other family visitors, the brigade leader and his wife had the guest house entirely to themselves.

September 1954. It was announced that prisoners with a good record could petition to live outside of the camp, an arrangement that is to be distinguished from "temporary parole." Under the new system, the camp director could, at his discretion, permit a worker with a good record to live outside the prison camp, although continuing to work at regular *lager* labour. However, the director had to assume responsibility for the prisoner's good behaviour. Therefore, although the permissive regulation was in existence, as of January 1955, when our Japanese informants left Tayshet, there had been no case of outside residence under this provision.

October 1954. Prisoners were allowed to grow their hair long. Until that time, they had either been shaven clean or had had a crew-cut.

Working Conditions:

June 1954. (a) The work day was reduced from ten to eight hours. Also a more careful check was kept on the number of hours worked. Formerly work records had been very loose, and a ten-hour working day often stretched to twelve or thirteen hours without the prisoner receiving any extra credit. Under the new system, the total work day, including transportation time, did not exceed ten hours.

(b) Piecework rates were raised 20%. 20%.

(c) There was a relaxation of the guarding of prisoners and an extension of the *bes konvoi*, or unguarded convoy, system. Until then, a "group" of prisoners, even if it consisted of only one man, had to be under the control of two armed guards. Even from the standpoint of the authorities this was a wasteful arrangement. If a single prisoner had to leave the area under guard, then two additional guards had to be called to accompany him, or else the entire work group had to be moved with him and then returned to its original working place when he returned. Under the new system, officials were given more discretionary authority to permit prisoners to move about without armed guard.

(d) There was a change in the system of guarding workplaces. Until June 1954 every workplace was surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence. The first barbed wire was marked by red flags. Anyone stepping beyond the red flag into the *zaprétnaya zóna*, or forbidden zone, would be fired upon by the guards. Under the new system, however, the zone of toleration was expanded.

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Now, if a prisoner passed the red flag, the guard called out warning. Ten metres beyond the red flags there were notices in black, warning "Halt, or you will be shot." Only when a prisoner passed these black signs would the guards start shooting.

Winter 1954. When the temperature fell below –42° C., work stopped. Although this regulation had existed before, it had not been observed scrupulously, prisoners often working in –50° C. and more.

Penal Regulations:

June 1954. On medical certification of unfitness for work, lame and crippled prisoners were to be released, regardless of length of time served.

June 1954. Any prisoner with a good record and "outstanding" work performance could petition for release after completion of two-thirds of his sentence.

About July 1954. It was announced that upon petition sentences under Article 58 would be re-examined. Prisoners who upon re-examination were adjudged innocent of the charges on which they had been imprisoned would be released without regard to the length of time they had served. As of the end of 1954, of the 1,000 prisoners in Camp 13 who had been sentenced under Article 58, twenty-five were released as "innocent." They had all been sentenced to twenty-five years.

August 1954. It was announced that the camp director could, at his discretion, recommend immediate release for prisoners with "outstanding" records. In this case, the director would submit a request for judicial review to higher authorities. The reviewing authority could change the sentence without regard to the length of time served by the prisoners. The only qualification here was that the camp director retained responsibility for the conduct of any prisoner released on his recommendation. As of January 1955, there had been no releases under this new regulation in Tayshet No. 13.

In the middle of January 1955, the prisoners of Tayshet Camp 43, who were mainly foreigners, demanded of the authorities an improvement in their clothing ration. The response was unsatisfactory, so on January 16th, the prisoners went on strike, refusing their work assignments. The strike lasted for three days and ended with a promise by the authorities to investigate the matter.

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Letter from San Marino

A Postage Stamp State

I WAS about to park my car in a little square facing the Hotel Titano. A passer-by warned me not to.

"Why not?" I asked. "I can't see any 'NO PARKING' sign."

"There isn't one," the man agreed, "but that doesn't mean you can park there. Yesterday the Minister of the Interior was very annoyed when he found a car parked there."

"The Minister of the Interior?" I said. "I want to have a word with him about this. Can you send him along?"

It was my expectation that the few people gathered around us would greet my remark with a roar of laughter. They did not. The man just nodded:

"One moment, please . . . I think he is at the tobacconist's."

He went off to fetch the Minister. My fellow-passenger warned me:

"The Minister of the Interior is a very temperamental man."

No harsh words had ever passed between me and the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom, I reflected, on account of my parking habits, although I had spent more than seventeen years in Britain; was I now to start a quarrel with the Minister of the Interior after five minutes in San Marino? No, it wouldn't be fair. So I moved my car.

My fellow-passenger was an interpreter. I had crossed the San Marinese frontier (no guards) and had been welcomed by a huge board to "The Ancient Land of Liberty." I had climbed up to the top of the majestic sugarloaf-shaped Mount Titan. On reaching the town of San Marino itself—the capital of the republic of San Marino—I had stopped at a terrace to feast my eyes on the magnificent sights. It was then that a gentleman ran up and addressed me:

"You are English?"

"Yes, I come from England," I replied.

"Good," he said. "I am the English interpreter here. I am the only man in San Marino who speaks English."

"Can you direct me to a hotel?" I asked.

He was already getting into the car.

"Sure. I'll take you there," he said. "We'll go to the Hotel Titano. The manager there is the only other man in San Marino who speaks English."

On our way to the hotel the interpreter told me:

"By the way, you owe us £400,000."

I had been touched before in Italy, but the sums had always been more modest. I replied cautiously:

"I don't think I've ever met you."

"Besides," I continued after a moment's pause, "I cannot quite recall ever running-up a bill of £400,000 anywhere."

"It's not you personally," he informed me. "It's Great Britain. She owes us £400,000 war damages. You made an offer of £26,000 *ex gratia* payment. That's just not good enough. We need the money."

"Well," I told him firmly, "don't count on me. I am a careful man. I'm not in the habit of throwing my money about."

He took me to the hotel. I was just about to go up to my room when the manager called after me:

"I say," he said, "you know you owe us £400,000?"

"My attention has been drawn to this," I replied. "And I have already made it clear that I am not going to pay up. Not even half of it. Not even the £26,000 *ex gratia*. I should like this to be clearly understood between myself and the population of San Marino."

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It was, however, not clearly understood. I had to refuse payment on many subsequent occasions. The origin of the claim is this: in 1944 retreating German forces took refuge in the republic and the British found it necessary to bomb the Germans, causing considerable damage to San Marinese property. The British subsequently repudiated all legal obligations in connection with this damage but offered an *ex gratia* payment. The damage, according to the San Marinesi was £400,000; according to the British, £26,000. The discrepancy seems to be not insignificant; and pending a settlement, I have to advise British tourists not to pay even the smaller sum, however hard they may be pressed by innkeepers, ice-cream vendors, and waiters.

SAN MARINO has the reputation of being the smallest and most ancient state in the world. With her 1600 years of continued existence she seems, indeed, to be the oldest. But she is certainly not the smallest: she has twice as many inhabitants as Andorra and with her territory of thirty-eight square miles she is a veritable great power compared with Monaco's 360 acres. According to history—mingled with legend—a Dalmatian by the name of Marinus, an early Christian by profession, came to Mount Titano in the 4th century to escape persecution, and founded the republic. San Marino is now governed by statutes dating from the 13th century (the period of Magna Carta) and it is emphasised in all pamphlets, tourist guides, and brochures that she is an autonomous state with full internal and external sovereignty and enjoying all international rights in complete equality with the United States or China. San Marino has about 12,500 inhabitants, about as many as Horley, Surrey. Sutton Coldfield has about four times as many, yet Sutton Coldfield cannot even contemplate sending an Ambassador to Washington; San Marino could, if only she had the money.

A reference book in front of me describes San Marino's main industries as "wine, cereals, cheese, olive oil, cattle, ceramics, and lime." San Marino may, indeed, possess all these, but these are not her main industries. Her main industries are: postage stamps, divorce, gambling, and tourism.

1. Let us begin with tourism. It is entirely a post-war development started by the Casino. Before 1938 very few ordinary tourists ever thought of spending a holiday, or even a day or two in San Marino. After the war, however, the tourist trade developed by leaps and bounds. An official gave me these figures:

"In 1949 we had 74,500 tourists," he said. "In 1950, 61,000 only. In 1951 the blockade was in full force so we had very few visitors indeed. But in 1952, 166,000 people came, next year 315,000, and in 1954 more than 600,000. We can only count registered tourists who spend at least one night here. We reckon on another 200,000 day-trippers. That makes 800,000 for 1954. This year—1955—we hope to reach the million mark."

That means about eighty-three times the sum total of the inhabitants. The corresponding figure would be about 5,150 million tourists a year in Great Britain, roughly twice the population of the globe.

Most of the tourists are Italians but there are also many Germans, Swiss, and Austrians; Scandinavians form a sizeable minority. There are as yet very few English and American tourists.

2. The Casino. You have probably wondered, as I did, what the official quoted earlier meant when he spoke of "the blockade" of 1950 and 1951. It was in 1949 that the Government of San Marino hit upon the idea of increasing its revenue by opening a gambling Casino. Tourists—mostly Italian visitors from Rimini, Ravenna, and other towns—started arriving *en masse* and they found the place irresistible. Many lost money, as in all Casinos, and many lost more than they could afford. So the Italian Government stepped in and—in Signor Scelba's words—refused to allow Italian citizens "to be bled of their savings." San Marino was asked to close the Casino. San Marino, being the Ancient Land of Liberty, refused to close the Casino. So the Italian police blockaded the frontiers and the republic was forced in the end, and after a heroic struggle, to close the Casino. All the same, the Casino played a glorious part in San Marinese history since it laid the foundation stone of tourism. Today, if Italian citizens still desire to be bled of their savings, they have to travel to the Lido, Genoa, or Naples, where, however, the revenue of the Casino goes into the pockets of the Italian, not the San Marinese, Government.

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3. Legend has it that San Marino—before opening the Casino—sent a study-group to Reno, to examine the celebrated and efficient gambling institutions of Nevada. The study-group, so I was told, studied roulette and baccarat with zeal and devotion but, at the same time, could not fail to notice Nevada's second flourishing industry: divorce. So the San Marinesi started publicising their own famous and ancient law courts where divorces could be obtained at a reasonable price. The population of Italy once again became feverishly interested, since divorce does not exist in Italy at all. Of course, only residents of San Marino could obtain a divorce in the republic but — fortunately — anyone could establish residence there after a month's stay. Once again the Italian Government stepped in. San Marinese divorce is still valid in Italy but it takes a year now to establish residence. It seems to me that San Marino goes out of her way to offer the Italians all sorts of fun but the spoil-sport Italian Government always interferes.

4. The Italians cannot—and do not even try to—spoil the fun San Marino has with postage stamps. A treaty exists between Italy and San Marino, according to which Italy makes an annual payment (it is now £90,000 but the sum is the subject of desperate bargaining every year) and in return San Marino foregoes her right to print money, grow tobacco, distil alcohol, or impose duties of any kind. She is, however, allowed to print her own stamps and this she does with a zeal and vigour unparalleled since the days of Montenegro. Magnificent and impressive stamps pour from the printing presses every month or so to the delight and despair of collectors. You can buy postcards in San Marinese shops with varied and colourful stamps (the grouping chosen by experts) already affixed.

THERE are seventy shops in the republic and eleven restaurants. Garibaldi once stayed in one of the hotels, and President Lincoln wrote to the Captains Regent in 1861: "Although your dominion is small your state is nevertheless one of the most honoured in our history." President Roosevelt also spoke of San Marino with admiration. Apart from polite phrases about ancient liberties and fortitude, etc., San Marino has indeed a splendid record in sheltering political refugees. During and after the last war more than 100,000 refugees passed through the little state—about eight times the total population.

San Marino has no daily newspaper and only three or four weeklies. She has an army of two hundred, mostly part-time, soldiers. Service in this militia is, in theory, compulsory for all males between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five. It is rare for people to be called up for full-time military service. In 1944, at the height of the world war, San Marino had to strengthen her armed forces by eighty men. They proved unequal to the task of keeping out the retreating German divisions because—as I was informed—they had not been properly mechanised. Indeed, I was told, not one of the eighty men was mechanised at all. San Marino has a police force of fourteen and there are another six secret policemen, all personally known to, and liked by, every citizen.

San Marino is ruled, at the time of my visit, by a Communist-Socialist coalition which possesses a majority in the Council. A great deal has been said about the "Red rule" and the "Communist régime" of San Marino but the little republic is quite unlike a People's Democracy. There were elections in 1955 and someone hit upon the wonderful idea of bringing San Marinese voters back from America and Belgium (a number of San Marinesi are working in the mines of Belgium) to oust the Reds. About sixty people came from Detroit, thirty more from France and Belgium—ninety altogether, a number thought sufficient to bring about a Christian Democrat landslide. The surprising result, however, was an increased majority for the Left, not because the people tend to be leftish but because they are good San Marinesi. It appeared to them that the Socialists and Communists might be better guardians of their ancient rights and constitution; and they feared that the Christian Democrats would be too subservient to Italy. The painful memory of the outstanding event of recent San Marinese history still lingered on—the Casino episode in which the Italian Christian Democrats had been the villains of the piece.

During my visit to Government House I told the junior official who accompanied me that I should like to speak to the Foreign Minister. We were informed, however, that

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the Council of Ministers was in session. I was about to withdraw modestly but the young official informed me that the Cabinet meeting presented no difficulty as one could have the Foreign Minister summoned out to the corridor, and Signor Giacomini, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, actually did come out to see me in the Debating Chamber of Parliament.

There was some excitement and expectation in the air; the Cabinet was expecting a telephone call from Paris. I asked Signor Giacomini to give me an exposé of San Marinese foreign affairs. He told me he was just bargaining with Italy to have the yearly quota increased. He added that he was also bargaining with Britain which, he explained, owed San Marino £400,000 for war damage but had offered only £26,000 *ex gratia* payment. Signor Giacomini hinted that he might accept £100,000 if the money were paid without any further delay. I behaved as though I had not quite caught his meaning and left without paying the £100,000 *ex gratia* or otherwise.

NEXT day I had to flee San Marino in haste. Events had taken a somewhat unexpected turn.

During the morning I was talking to an official in his room when his telephone rang. Whatever he was told on the line quite obviously had an electrifying effect on him. He turned to me in great excitement, covering up the mouthpiece of the telephone:

"I am told that the Duke of Gloucester is on his way to San Marino. Is that true?"

The Duke of Gloucester was visiting British war graves in Italy at the time and, according to this worried government official, he had changed his route and was now heading towards San Marino.

"Are you expecting him?" I asked. "Were you notified of this visit?"

"No," he replied. "That's the whole point, you see. We must make some preparation if he is coming. My colleague who has just rung me says that the Duke has heard that there are British war graves in San Marino and that is why he is on his way here now."

"Oh, you have British war graves here?" I said. "How many?"

"Two."

Then he asked again:

"Is the Duke coming or not?"

"How should I know?" I asked him.

"He is your Duke," he said firmly.

I pointed out that I was not really authorised to act as spokesman for the Duke of Gloucester. I said that the two British soldiers buried in San Marino deserved as much respect as the two, or twenty-two thousand, buried elsewhere. But — I contended — these royal tours were planned months beforehand and it seemed unlikely that, on hearing of San Marino's two war graves, the Duke of Gloucester would upset his plans, cancel his other arrangements, and drive into a foreign state unannounced. But —I added emphatically—I really had no idea and they must not rely on my advice or information.

He nodded and picked up the receiver.

"Look here," he said. "I have an Englishman here in my room. Some sort of semi-official person. He knows all about these royal tours. He says we needn't worry. It is absolutely out of the question for the Duke of Gloucester to come here. He says he is prepared to take full responsibility."

I returned to my hotel, packed my suitcase, paid my bill and left the ancient republic in a hurry.

Just in case the Duke turned up after all.

George Mikes

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Letter from British Guiana

Politics and Pork-knockers

SOUTH of Trinidad the blue Caribbean ends, the great rivers of the Continent throwing out mud that turns the ocean viscous and pink-brown. This is still the "*Wilde Kust*" or "wild coast" as it was called in Raleigh's day, when the Arawaks and Caribs had left it to nature, moving up the rivers to plant their cassava on the riverbanks. From the air, now, it is endless bush, seen palely through the mist that steams up from the swamps and creeks. The Indians called the whole area from the Orinoco to the Amazon "Guiana," the "land of waters."

We touched down at Atkinson Field, an American airbase twenty miles up the Demerara river from Georgetown, capital of British Guiana. After a mile of smooth American road British Guiana begins with a road of red, burnt earth, pot-holed every ten yards, dry now but in the rains a morass whose surface is washed away into the drains. Shanties line the road all the way to Georgetown, and the visitor by air sees the worst of the colony along this road—battered shanties on stilts decorated with the prayer flags of Indians, the more squalid shacks of the improvident Africans, and now and then a shop or a drinking "parlour" bearing the name of Wung Fu or Chang. Filtered moonlight fell on the Demerara as we came to Plantation Diamond, and molasses scented the air. The slums here were still worse in places, but large areas were devoted to new housing schemes for sugar workers. Rehousing is going on all over Georgetown, a tangible sign to the Guianese that something is being done for them. They are also being encouraged to build their own houses in self-help schemes.

Georgetown

A BEAUTIFUL colonial town of white wooden houses, with broad straight streets laid out by the Dutch and each once divided by a canal. Now most of the canals are built over as grass walks and lined with flamboyant trees. Cool night air, tree-frogs like bird-song. Tremendous rain that night, and the power failed. Insistent song of the kiskadee, originally named by French settlers the "*qu'est que dit*," after its call.

It is the most politically conscious town I ever knew—the politics are local. From the man in the street to the newest expatriate, the conversation is on what is to be done to give the colony a sound economy, raise its standards of living, develop its natural resources. Almost the whole population lives on the flat coastal fringe of the colony and now that malaria has been conquered the population is rising every day. The coast cannot contain them; they must be settled on agricultural lands along the rivers or in the Interior. But in the past, when it was the policy of Sugar to keep labour on the coast, the myth was fostered of an Interior impossible to conquer; and now people will not leave the coast. The problem is to convince them that the Interior is not a place where tigers will jump out on them at every step.

I had a long talk with each of the two leaders of the P.P.P., the Indian, Cheddi Jagan, and the African, L. F. S. Burnham. The Guianese are strongly governed by emotions, and Jagan appeals to them with tears, describing his pregnant mother working on the sugar fields, etc. The party has no

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real policy or any economic ideas, only an emotional hatred of what it sees to be wrong. The wrongs are there, but the P.P.P.'s methods of ending them would plunge the colony into a greater misery. A few minutes with Burnham or Jagan reveal their political innocence. Burnham was not treated well when he studied law in England and he now has a neurotic hatred of the English. He still believes that British colonial territories exist to be exploited cynically by vested interests. He said that all colonial freedom had been gained because the point was reached when Great Britain simply couldn't hold the territory any longer and had to give in, and it was his aim to bring British Guiana to that point. He has always been evasive about his feelings towards Communism and when I asked him about this he would only say that it was self-evident that much good had been done in Russia—though, on the other hand, there were many things in Russia that he could not approve of.

Jagan and Burnham have split—Burnham has seized control of the party—and, as I expected, Jagan was bitter about Burnham. But on all political matters he told me precisely what Burnham had told me. Our conversation took place under a portrait of Stalin, and he admitted—with his celebrated smile—that he was a Marxist. He added that when he had power he would not apply Marxism to the country because it was not yet ready for it. He would use the present economy for his own purposes, and await the day of universal Communism in the New World.

Booker Brothers, who form three-quarters of the Sugar Producers' Association, are alive to the absolute necessity of constructive counter-action to the P.P.P.—who would certainly be re-elected if the Constitution were returned and elections allowed. They are aiming to produce cane with a higher sucrose content so that cane land can be released to farmers, thus alleviating the land shortage. They are ploughing part of their profits back into the country, building thousands of new houses for their workers, who pay 8s. a week rent. They want to take part in the "Guianisation" of the colony by training local men for important jobs in the company, but it is difficult to find the right men. When, at a recent competitive examination, nobody was passed, the Guianese decided the whole thing was a ramp. But it is not. King Sugar is fighting for his throne. He is fast becoming a Sugar Daddy to the colony, but not through any particular philanthropical motive; he knows that the old days are no more.

Along the Coast

THE coast road is as bad as the road from Atkinson Field. It had been raining hard for days and the land on either side was flooded for miles at a time, the stilts of the houses at last showing their necessity. All this land is four feet below sea level. A wall running the length of the coast keeps the sea at bay, but the drained and irrigated land of the sugar estates does not begin for a mile or so inland. The intermediate land, where largely Indian peasants live, grow rice, and keep a cow, is flooded half the year. Even so the thrifty Indians wrest a living here. If you see a really poor area, with really bad shacks, it will turn out to be where Africans are living. Now and then nature has allowed a sand reef to penetrate a few miles inland and here coconut plantations have been planted. The proprietor is always an Indian, and often he has built himself a fine house. One such proprietor employs a man all through the dry season to spray water on the road outside his house so that he won't be bothered by the dust.

All these Indians are descendants of indentured coolies who were brought over to work on the plantations after the abolition of slavery caused a labour shortage. The really rich men of the colony are the sons or grandsons of Indian foremen on the plantations, who got their jobs by force of personality and made enough money to give their sons a first-class education. Cheddi Jagan's father was a foreman on Plantation Port Mourant, and when I was there I met him. He is a tall, fine-looking old man with a drooping moustache, great charm, and, in spite of diabetes, an extreme fondness for rum. "Times is hard, times is hard," he told me. "Twenty years ago rum thirty cents a bottle, now 'e two dollar. Times is very hard." He proved to have a very pretty ironic humour. Knowing that he is a supporter of his son I asked him what he felt of the political situation. "Now this Governor," he began, "him very nice man. Before he no Governor get money, but this Governor very nice man because he get forty-four million dollars. But down here in

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Corentyne we no see one cent. And again I say this Governor him very nice man because before him come we no see any soldier in Guiana, and because of he we now see soldier walking round with guns. This Governor, him very nice man."

The plantations have beautiful names, given them by Dutch, French, and British settlers: Lilienda and Sophia, Chateau Margot, Success, Triumph, Harmony Hall, Rebecca's Lust, Golden Grove, Vriheidslust, Mary's Hope, Lovely Lass, Rose Hall, Lusignan, Rosignol. I spent a day at Plantation Enmore. The manager of an estate was a little king in the old days, usually a tough Scotsman who would personally take a trouble-making cane-cutter into the "backdam" and beat him up. He was equally feared by the English overseers. Much of this remains today; even senior English staff treat the vast old manager's house as if it were some feudal domain and the manager the Lord of the manor.

The overseers patrol the fields on mules, wearing bush hats and carrying long whips, a vestigial sign of slave days. They are there to see that the cane-cutters don't slack; during the cutting season it is imperative that the grinding plant should be kept fed with cane. The cutters load the cane into barges on the canals intersecting the fields, and mules drag the barges back to the factory. Girls walk among the cutters with buckets filled with ice and bottled drinks, which are paid for out of the piece rates the cutters get. One cutter called out to a girl, "Dollar, bring I a Coca-Cola," and I was told the girl is known as Dollar Chance, a local whore who goes round the parlours crying, "Dollar a chance, dollar a chance."

The overseer in this field was a tall man in his early thirties, with a large R.A.F. moustache. He had been an officer in the R.A.F. and came out to British Guiana after the war when there seemed little for him to do at home. Now it is difficult to get overseers from England. Scots farmboys have always proved the best. All over the colony one comes across ex-overseers who came out after the war. Most are marked by an almost pathological hatred of the coolies who were in their charge and a feeling that the colonies are no longer a place where an Englishman with a sense of adventure can come and make good. In this they're right.

All down the coast people had red stains on their shirts, trousers, and hats, which puzzled me for some time. Then I learnt the feast of Pagwar was just passed. It's a Hindu feast; on the first day pure perfumed water should be thrown about the streets to symbolise the purity of the god, the next day red-stained water to symbolise blood sacrifice, and on the third day ashes to symbolise death. In fact the feast has become an excuse for people to squirt red water at each other and to throw girls in ditches, where mud does the duty of ashes. Overseers on the estates are treated to every possible variation during Pagwar and if they complain to the manager they're told that nothing can ever be done about Pagwar and they must lump it.

The Rupununi

THESE savannas lie in the south-west of the colony, ten days river journey from the coast. They are a little British corner of the great Brazilian *pampa*. The grass is poor and it needs twenty-five acres to support one cow. During the long wet season all is swamp and the cows are confined on small islands. During the dry season they roam across the vast open ranges, poor specimens of animals.

By jeep across the savannas. The sandpaper trees, the cashew trees with their pleasantly tart fruit; always on the far edge of us the blue Kanaku Mountains. Creeks of beautiful blue water, but full of pirai with saw-like teeth who have a love for warm blood. Ridges of ité palms. Wind and glare of sun, great dryness—even after many beers the throat feels parched.

We passed the area marked on the old maps as Lake Parima, the land of El Dorado. Now it is dry and parched. Went from Good Hope ranch to Pirara, the next habitation—sixty miles. There are 3,000 Indians on the savannas and a handful of ranchers. All the ranches except two are owned by members of the Melville family. Melville was a Scotsman and by all accounts a man of some education, who came to British Guiana in the nineties to prospect for gold and diamonds. On one trip up the Essequibo river he was attacked by malaria and his men left him for dead on a sandreef. Indians found him and nursed him back to health. Then he wandered with them over the mountains to the

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savannas where they went at certain seasons of the year. He fell in love with the savannas and the Indian way of life, took two wives and settled with them, producing ten children. He would trade for them on the coast and come back with bales of cloth with which he'd buy cattle from the Brazilians across the border. The cattle was only for local use—there was no means of transporting meat down to the coast. Then, in 1920, a cattle trail was cut through the bush and the cattle walked some two hundred miles to their slaughter, arriving almost skeletons. Now only the strongest animals are sent down the trail and every day a Dakota flies up to collect meat from the savannas. Meat is expensive in Georgetown.

Pirara is the ranch of Ben Hart, a seventy-seven year old American from South Dakota who came to the savannas from Brazil in 1913 and married one of Melville's daughters. He is a fine old man with the look of a distinguished American senator. When he learnt I was a writer he asked me if I'd ever heard of a fellow who was up in the Rupununi over twenty years ago. "Fellow called Evelyn Waugh. He stayed with us here. A durned fine fellow, a durned fine fellow." He was very pleased when I told him that the durned fine fellow had distinguished himself.

Ben Hart prospected gold on the upper Rupununi river with his partner, a cousin of Jesse James. In those days a section of the northern savanna was being terrorised by a huge Negro bandit called Ocean Shark, and Hart and James let it be known that they intended to get rid of him. One day Melville came to Ben Hart and told him the Shark had heard what he'd been saying and was on his track. Ben said he hoped he'd come and fight it out with him. A little while later, word came that a rancher called Macdonald had died, leaving his small property to his Makushi Indian wife. The Shark had marched in on the wife, taken the property, and forced her to be his concubine. This was enough for Ben—his weathered old face gleamed as he told me the story. He saddled his horse and checked his guns. He camped that night a mile from the Macdonald ranch and next morning went over. Ben found the Shark swinging in his hammock outside the ranch. He drew his gun and said, "Shark, you've taken enough from this place, nothing here's going with you. You've got just two minutes to get moving north, and never come round here again." The Shark rushed at him and he just had time to give him a blow with all his force on the side of his head, with the butt of his gun. But this only dazed the Shark so he knocked him out with another blow. The Indians looked on at all this quite unmoved. The Shark knew that the incident had lost him his prestige in the area so he agreed to leave. He never came back to that part of the savannas, but some months later he turned up in the south, took over a village, and raped five of the girls. But the Wapishana Indians of the south were different from the Makushis. His body was found in his hut with six arrows in it.

We set off across rough, beautiful country, rolling and mountain-edged, to the village of Shea. It is in Wapishana country but has been socially isolated since, a century or more ago, two Negro slaves, Boney and Fredericks, escaped to this part and took Indian wives, raising large families, who interbred. Physically the African element is strong. The people are backward. Children were everywhere. As in the rest of the colony the end of malaria has meant a sudden rise in population. It is one of the Government's headaches to know what to do for the increasing Wapishanas and Makushis, now that their land has been taken by the ranchers and their ancient subsistence economy has been put out of order by the encroachments of civilisation.

On to Awarwaunau, Windcreek Hill, on open land. Children drinking their powdered milk, a gift from America. It is a paradox that in cattle country American powdered milk should be necessary, but the herds are not dairy herds. Mothers suckling babies up to three wherever one went. The tuchau or headman complained that the water was bad and when were the Government going to keep their promise of boring a well? They were ashamed, he said, to offer visitors their water, it was so bad. Fencing has begun so that the Indians' cattle can be kept separate from the ranchers', but the barbed wire has proved a boon to the Indians in another way. Hammered, it can be made into excellent arrow heads for fishing; and fences have been ruined. Fishing with bow and arrow goes on in all the rivers. It is a subtle art; the refraction of light must be judged exactly and

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this varies at different times of day and at different points on the river.

Arrived at Karanambo, the ranch of Tiny McTurk and his wife. Tiny has lived here for over thirty years and for twenty of them has had the bricks for a new house to replace his old one, where snakes live harmlessly in the warmth of the thatch roof. When he married, he brought his bride up to Karanambo by river. During the journey, four of their paddle crew died of malaria and they arrived at the ranch after dark to find a ten-foot bushmaster in one room and a large anaconda in the other. But Mrs. McTurk, like her husband, wants to live nowhere else. Tiny fishes all day and I spent much of my time down on the river with him, fishing with bows and arrows for lucunani. One evening we walked through the bush to try and get an aruana, the bait for the huge arapaima that lives in the Rupununi river, the largest freshwater fish in the world. (It weighs up to 500 lbs.) He took his rifle and a cutlass which he calls his "alligator pacifier." It was fascinating to walk in the bush with him, to see him point out a mark on a tree and say, "A tapir passed this way about an hour ago," or to sniff and say, "There's a howler monkey up in that tree, but he won't move." The bush filled with sword-grass between the trees that cuts the flesh like a razor.

At the pond we heard "plonk" on the surface of the water and two three-foot alligators swam out from the bank—they are quite harmless unless you step on them. We got no aruanas but I shot a small pirai, by mistake, with my bow. It bared its vicious teeth in death and I put a piece of thick bush-rope to its mouth; the teeth parted and the rope was cut in a flash. The pirai, in schools, can reduce a man to a skeleton in a few minutes.

Up the Mazaruni

THE Mazaruni is one of the great rivers of British Guiana, the route to the gold and diamond fields, a majestic river, the bush on either bank filled with giant trees, buttressed like the mora, soaring and straight like the greenheart. For its first 125 miles the Mazaruni is a maze of small islands, rapids, and falls. In the old days, when the mining men, or pork-knockers, went up the river they would paddle against a current which an inboard engine can only just fight. There would be an average of five deaths a month on this part of the river, mostly when the boats were being hauled over the falls; a man would slip, and would be lost in the rushing water. The Government has built a track which takes lorries from Bartica to Isano, to cut out this stretch of river. No boats now go there, and for 125 miles the country is uninhabited except for a columbite mining camp. The boat of the mining camp was in Bartica the day I arrived. The son of one of the miners had had an accident and he had been brought to hospital the quickest way—down river. The boat was returning the same way and I seized an opportunity to go back with it.

It was thirty-five feet, with a crew of ten Amerindians, a Negro bowman, and an East Indian captain. For each season of the year there is one right way to go up the river out of a hundred possible ones. One passage between the islands will bring you to a falls no boat could get through, another will be a mad swirl of currents. All day the boat was fighting against white water, avoiding submerged rocks. We camped for the night on the river bank, the Indians building me a little open-sided shelter where I slung my hammock. Next morning at dawn we set out again and, as the mist cleared, we reached the really bad spot of the river. We came through a lane between islands where overhanging branches slashed against the boat. Suddenly it opened into a great area of surging white water, the confluence of five falls—Kaburi, Wara-Wara, Pabacash, Piramap, and Annisette—whose waters wrestle with each other and cause a chaos of currents. We fought over to a rock where two lots of water dropped some fifteen feet, and tied up. Everything was taken out of the boat and carried to the comparatively still water at the top of the fall. The boat was to be hauled round over the rocks. Five Indians took the bow-line, or wap, and the rest the stern line, and began hauling to the bowman's orders. The ends of both lines were round a tree, which made me feel a little more secure. The faces of all were magnificent studies of expression, as the men hauled, knowing that if the boat cut loose we would be marooned for days on the rock. "Haul, boys, haul," cried the bowman, "haul the wap, steady, ease the stern line, ease it, hold, haul the wap." All in a cry of furious

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excitement and anxiety. At last we got to open water and the most exciting minutes I have ever known were over.

THREE days later I was on the pork-knocker's boat on the Upper Mazaruni. Nobody knows the exact meaning of pork-knocker, but one of them gave me the best explanation I've heard: rations for miners in the old days were rice and pork tails—the miners would say that they were going to "knock the pork" when they went into the fields. The men, and one whore on her way to the fields, sat on piles of cargo, and during a long sunny spell I sat on the roof of the little cabin. One man, a former timber cutter, sang a quiet little song with the refrain,

Timberman, me weary work,
O-ho, see sun a-go,
Timberman, me wan' go home.
Timberman, me weary work,
O-ho, see punt a-come,
Timberman, me wan' go home.

A grizzled old man with a straggling moustache sat silent and almost dejected all the way, as if the incurable optimism of the pork-knocker had at last died in him and he knew that he would never find his bonanza. The pork-knocker is "grub-staked" for so many weeks by a shop on the diamond fields and sells the stones to the shop, the trader deducting the cost of the food. Fortunes have been made, but they are always blued in Georgetown. Two young pork-knockers sat on the cargo. They were partners. One of them said something to the other which he didn't like and, probably more as a means of passing the time, he began a piece of abuse which lasted for nearly half an hour. It was a *Virtuosenstück* in Creolese, and I memorised as many phrases as I could to note down later. There was poetry to it—the opening line, "When you me vex so grieviously," might have been an opening line to some sonnet by Wyatt or Surrey.

"When you me vex so grieviously," he began, "I no care wi' yo' foolishness. You musta come from Mars, man, you so low in t'inking and fright me, funny man. Now realise, you vex stupidly. Me carry mood, man, and if d' spirit of God prevent me mak' joke wi' yo' me is reasonable but does vex. Have me got tek it? Allow me tell yo', man, outside o' business nothin' else I has to do wi' yo'. When me walk wi' a man, I got be happy wid he. You no superior to flesh, man, and when you mak rough jokes wi' I, me has unguarded moments, man, and me vex. And why yo' wan' d' whores so much, man, and you no drink nuff, man. Why yo' value yo' life so immeasurably? When you yo'self, man, me give you a hearing, but me will give yo' no answer."

WHEN we reached Tumereng the rain had come again. I slushed up the bluff to the large shack at the top. A radio was blaring calypsos and as I neared the sound seemed beyond all measure, drumming in my ears. At two downstairs windows a crowd of laughing women appeared, pointing at me and calling what were presumably obscenities. I found a man and asked him where Mr. Chang was but in the noise he couldn't hear me. The mad sound and the cries of the women had unnerved me and I shouted with all my force, "Where's Mr. Chang and for God's sake turn that noise down." The man pointed to the windows of the room above the one where the whores were and then pointed to a door opening into their room. I went in and a dozen of them were round me, grabbing at me, pulling down the shoulders of their dresses to reveal pendulous bubs, crying obscenities, and saying, "Yo' frightened me, eh?" I pushed through these harpies to the staircase, at the top of which was a trap-door on which I knocked. It rose and there was the inquiring face of Mr. Chang. "Please tell them to turn the noise down," I cried, "I can't hear myself speak." But, talking so that I could just hear him, he said imperturbably, "This is a bad place. They do what they like. They like music like this, all day. It keeps them happy."

I had intended to spend a few nights in Tumereng, but the shack I was offered was filthy and miserable. I would have preferred a hammock slung under some ité palms to this squalor. So I went down river a mile to the police station, part of which was a rest house. Tumereng was a place to visit but not to stay in. Having been there, I have an excellent idea of what the innermost circle of hell must be like.

Michael Swan

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BOOKS

Novels and Highbrows

FROM the publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836, Dickens has probably been the second most widely read writer in the English language. His general popularity has remained constant. His reputation with serious readers and critics, however, underwent a long decline from about 1860 until the 1930's. His novels have now almost regained as much regard among the intelligentsia as they have always enjoyed with the public at large. Even in the period of his greatest decline, he was never without enthusiastic champions among the few—such diverse admirers as Shaw, Gissing, Swinburne, and Chesterton. The repair of his reputation has been made by missionaries as diverse—Edmund Wilson, V. S. Pritchett, George Orwell, Jack Lindsay, Humphry House. I never remember a time when Dickens was not at once the novelist I most admired and most enjoyed; no other writer has been so great a stimulus to my own approach to writing fiction. I do remember, however, in the 1930's when I read Edmund Wilson's brilliant essays, the delighted surprise with which I found my own high view of Dickens's work set out by a "highbrow" critic. I had so long been used to my Dickens worship being received with scorn or silence among my intelligent friends. To analyse the changing reputation of an author who has commanded the respect of such an enormous variety of readers and the high regard of such a miscellaneous collection of serious critics must surely, I have always thought, throw great light not only upon his own work but upon the nature of English literary taste in the last hundred years.

It is this task that Mr. George H. Ford has undertaken.* I do not think that my devotion to Dickens has misled me when I assert that the resulting study, *Dickens and His Readers*, is a work of literary history of the very highest order. Mr. Ford is very widely read in modern literature and literary criticism. He is scholarly, sophisticated, and humane. He knows his subject so well that he asks all the right questions and even where he confesses, as I believe rightly, that criticism cannot answer them, he enlightens by his very negative answer. His study of Dickens's reputation—as I have always believed such a study would do—probes deeply not only into the nature of Dickens's vision of life but also into the aims and scope of serious novelists in the last hundred years. In addition he has the rare gift of being able to deal with complex and sensitive questions of literary taste and atmosphere in a style that retains clarity and humour without vulgarising or oversimplifying.

THERE is not space in a review to mention more than a few of the many vital literary problems which he discusses in the course of this delightful and penetrating book. The central topic raised by the discussion of Dickens's reputation, however, subsumes a variety of underlying questions that agitate literary criticism today. They may be posed proudly by asking: What happened to split up the mid-Victorian novel-reading public into highbrow, middlebrow,

* *Dickens and His Readers*. By GEORGE H. FORD. Princeton University Press. $5. London: Cumberlege. 48s.

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and lowbrow? Or, again, how is it possible for a novelist to write for persons of all levels of education and sophistication and yet remain worthy of the most serious consideration? Or, again, why do most serious æsthetic canons of novel-writing fail to contain Dickens's genius? Or, perhaps, is the novel a satisfactory subject for æsthetic criticism at all?

These questions, of course, have been brought very much to the fore in recent years, because, just as in 1860 a whole tradition of the novel began to cease to satisfy, so now the whole tradition which grew out of that dissatisfaction is in its turn ceasing to suffice. For the many literary critics and novelists of today, who are busy attacking or defending the "experimental" and "traditional" forms of the novel, Mr. Ford's study has peculiar significance, for in his analysis of the critics who began the reaction against Dickens—of G. H. Lewes, Taine, Sir James Stephen, Bagehot, Meredith—he shows so clearly that they failed in appreciation because they held their theories too narrowly and too shallowly. And so it was with succeeding generations of critics—with the worshippers of the Russians and with the Nationalists. In their anxiety to make the novel a serious art, these critics allowed themselves to be unduly concerned with superficial appearances. They feared the qualities of entertainer and actor in Dickens so greatly that they dismissed him too easily. They applied their canons—artistic integrity, seriousness of theme, probability of character and incident, poetry of emotion, mastery of formal proportion—so narrowly that they failed to see that Dickens excelled in all of these, but in no conventional manner, often unconsciously and always idiosyncratically. It would be well if modern critics and novelists revolting against the novels of our own predecessors took care to avoid an equal shallow dogmatism in their judgments.

In fact, of course, Lewes and the other critics reacted even then simply against Dickens's popularity. David Masson, one of his most discerning contemporaries, saw this —"the public have caught what is called his mannerism or trick; and hence a certain recoil from his writings among the cultivated and fastidious." But Lewes's dislike was more than an intellectually aristocratic preference. Attached to the overt serious, intellectual tone of George Eliot's work, he could not see to the depth of conflict which lay below Dickens's work. This supposed spiritual shallowness which Lewes detested in Dickens seemed even more apparent to later generations who worshipped Dostoyevsky. Yet Dostoyevsky himself saw straight to the deep spiritual conflicts in Dickens's work and was greatly influenced by it. Late 19th century critics influenced by Flaubert were revolted by what they felt to be Dickens's lack of artistic and formal mastery—they saw his work as episodic and incoherent. In some degree, of course, this was inevitable in novels subjected to serial publication. But the incoherence, once more, was only superficial. Dickens's novels, particularly from *Bleak House* onwards, are masterly unities of tone and atmosphere, they have an inner coherence which goes beyond purely formal construction. By the realists and naturalists, Dickens was charged with caricature and absurdity. Yet other critics have felt that his work lacked poetry and symbol. Perhaps, as Mr. Ford wisely suggests, modern admirers of Dickens have overstressed his symbolism, his likeness in parts of *Little Dorrit* or *Our Mutual Friend* to Kafka; nevertheless it is primarily as a poet and a symbolist that he is now so admired. The truth is that the standards of naturalism and symbolism were too narrowly applied—Dickens, like Zola, wrote of the real world, but at a level of reality which partakes both of object and of symbol. In short, Dickens suffered from the critics who were trying artificially to raise the tone of the novel because they knew that he was under-educated and appealed to the under-educated. Their canons raised the novel out of the reach of the vulgar and out of the reach of natural genius.

These, as I have said, are only a few of the questions which Mr. Ford discusses. In one remarkable chapter, he discusses the reaction of contemporaries to Little Nell. How was it that Jeffrey and Carlyle, Sydney Smith and Landor broke down at her death in 1840? Why is it that we are no longer shocked when we read Wilde's epigram that one must have a heart of stone to read of Little Nell's death without laughing? For myself, I do not find Little Nell's end so unmoving as Mr. Ford does and I am deeply moved by the death of Jo. Nevertheless, I was reminded of these changes in taste when

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I recently re-read *The Forsyte Saga* and was nauseated by the sentimentality. The death of innocence is as a vital symbol in 19th century literature from Dickens through Dostoevsky to James, and it needs serious study. It is not enough—and Mr. Ford makes a brilliant attack on psychological criticism—to trace the strength of Dickens's feeling for Nell and Jo and Paul Dombey in his own relations to Mary Hogarth. There are few approaches to criticism of the novel, in fact, which Mr. Ford's clear subtlety does not subject to disquieting analysis in this excellent book.

Angus Wilson

THE HETERODOX CONFORMIST

"He who says A must say B . . .," Trotsky used to thunder at the Communist who showed symptoms of dissidence. And, often enough, the dissident would find himself urged ineluctably along the straight path toward heresy, following the logic of his views with a near mathematical, if instinctive, precision. Having first begun to question the philosophic perfection of dialectical materialism, he would soon find himself disturbed by other and less academic matters, and then still others, until the Party itself became too questionable an enterprise for him to be comfortable in it. Sometimes, however, the dissident will fail in his logic, and land not in heresy, but in heterodoxy. The principle of motion of heterodoxy is erratic rather than sequential, it mocks at alphabetical progression; it is most completely represented by the man who has the uncanny ability simultaneously to think himself out of the Party and establish himself carnally within it. Heterodoxy's every gesture is titillatingly suggestive of unrealised, dangerous possibilities. Whereas heresy merely moves a man from one position to another, heterodoxy manages to locate him in two points at one instant. Mr. Graham Greene outside the Church would simply be another protestant. Inside it, he is a fascinating contrariety. That is why, though heresy can be very instructive, it is heterodoxy that more easily engages the interest of the spectator, providing him as it does with a quasi-æsthetic *frisson*: it is rather like the difference between divorce and adultery.

I confess that Mr. Richard H. S. Crossman as a Socialist has always affected me the way Graham Greene does as a Catholic. I am their captive audience, bewitched by the scent of sulphur that marks their complicated trails. Mr. Crossman's thinking—brilliant, provocative, wayward—excites in me an attention that none of the standard Socialist literature can evoke. For years I read the *New Statesman* in order to observe what he was up to; and now I even read the *Daily Mirror*, for the same reason—to such lengths does Mr. Crossman entice me.

Like Mr. Greene's Catholicism, so Mr. Crossman's Socialism has an exotic (one is almost tempted to say esoteric) quality. His premises and conclusions rarely match. If the one is conventionally Socialist, the other is bound not to be; and in between there is a circling, a swooping, an impulsive dare-devilry. There are even moments when one feels that his adventures into ideas are motivated by nothing more than a disinterested curiosity as to where a line of thought will lead. And just when he is threatening to vanish over the horizon, there he is suddenly back in the Socialist dovecote, explaining blandly that only by this particular flight was he enabled to remain in the same place. Lest I be misunderstood: I do not wish it to be thought that I am casting any reflection on Mr. Crossman's Socialist sincerity (or on Mr. Greene's Catholic piety, for that matter). It is only because he is sincere that the complicated web of his thought is so intriguing.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Mr. Crossman's Socialism is that it rejects the first commandment of the Socialist faith—"thou shalt be progressive"—while retaining the general outlook and the specific corollaries of this discarded tenet. A few years ago he wrote, in the *New Fabian Essays*:

The Evolutionary and the Revolutionary philosophies of progress have both proved false. There is far more to be said for the Christian doctrine of original sin than for Rousseau's

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fantasy of the noble savage, or Marx's vision of the classless society. [Italics in the original.]

One is scarcely surprised that he never did get around to saying anything for original sin, since he was clearly interested in erecting this antithesis only in order to define himself, in a spectacular way, as a non-"progressive." It is also characteristic of Mr. Crossman that, having made his point so spectacularly, he should leave it at that. After all, a Socialism that is not "progressive" seems to need some explaining: the very thing that makes Socialists join not merely a political party but a *movement* (a movement forward, surely?) is the assumption that Socialism *is* "progressive." But Mr. Crossman does not elaborate.

Some insight into his reluctance to press this point may be gained from a communication Mr. Crossman published in this magazine a couple of years back, replying to Arthur Koestler's essay on "political neuroses." There, Mr. Crossman wrote:

> The Conservative Party and the Labour Party each has its Utopian myth, which is often remote from the realities of day-to-day politics. But it is essential that the active politician should identify this myth with the machine in which he works. . . . The democratic system cannot work without incessant public suppressions of personal conviction. . . . A democratic party can very rarely be persuaded to give up even one of its traditional principles, and can never afford to scrap its central myth. . . . The job of party leaders is often to persuade their followers that the traditional policy is still being carried out, even when this is demonstrably not true.

To the naïve, this will sound horribly Machiavellian. In reality, it is a fair and candid description of the rôle of the political thinker who is also a political leader. For the intellectual, politics is a disenchanting experience; but if he is to be politically effective, he must see to it that this disenchantment remains his private privilege, for the public that is his constituency is more often moved by myths than by pure reason or cautious calculation. The moral would seem to be either that intellectuals should keep out of politics, or that they should be extremely circumspect and prudent about their involvement in it. But lack of prudence and circumspection is one of Mr. Crossman's most agreeable failings. As a consequence he is mistrusted by leaders and rank-and-file alike, for thinking too much, too independently, and out loud.

This is in itself an honourable position; but Mr. Crossman refuses to rest even there. Like all of us, he is irked by unpopularity and cannot resist the temptation to try to appear to be one of the "regulars." The result is that his thinking and writing are all too often inconstant and hoydenish; one hesitates to agree with him, because one is never certain that he agrees with himself. This effort on his part to conform has been expensive: Mr. Crossman as a political philosopher has not achieved what his extraordinary talents have promised, while as a popular tribune he can compete with neither the more sagacious nor the more simple-minded. What is worse, he finds himself carelessly saying things he cannot conceivably expect us to believe that he believes.

As an instance of this last phenomenon, take the following sentence which appears on the first page of his new pamphlet, *Socialism and the New Despotism*.* Mr. Crossman is listing the factors that have alienated the thoughtful, independent voter from the Labour Party, and among them we find:

> . . . the conviction, heightened by years of cold war propaganda, that complete socialisation, as practised in the Soviet Union, has degenerated into a totalitarian state, *in which the loss of civil liberties is not counterbalanced by the eradication of inequalities.*

The italics are mine—if they were Mr. Crossman's, I would really be alarmed. As it is, this absurd phrase was clearly just blurted out for this occasion, on which he wished emphatically to speak as a Socialist to other Socialists. It is the sort of thought that one sometimes comes across in the left-wing circles he is here addressing himself to—that freedom is the less violated if the rape takes place under the sign of equality. It is not an idea that is congenial to Mr. Crossman; but since he has no natural affinity for the rhetoric of the naïve "militant"—the pathos, the uplift, the prejudice—he picks up bits and pieces of jargon as they suit his purpose, and he does not always choose discriminatingly. This is also the most plausible explanation for that gratuitous (and ambiguous) reference

* Published by the Fabian Society. 1s. 6d.

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to the cold war in the same sentence, as well as for the carelessness with which he elsewhere uses such terms as "feudalism" and "totalitarianism"—it is not demagoguery in the usual sense of the term, but an almost pathetic attempt to achieve a common language with his audience.

The pamphlet itself is an eloquent plea for the protection of individual liberty against the "new managerial state," and a warning against the trading of personal freedom for any kind of pottage, even Socialist. So radical and intransigent is its defence of the individual against Big Government, Big Business, Big Unionism, that even the *Economist* found a kind word to say for it. It is without question a very expert bit of pamphleteering, and if it left me cold, that is only in part because too many of his arguments are formulated in such a way as to indicate that his dislike of "despotism" is but one aspect of his dislike of the Right Wing of the Labour Party: I have the impression, possibly unjust, that Mr. Crossman could argue the opposite case with no less cogency, should circumstances in his opinion warrant it. But mainly I find myself out of sympathy with the kind of bravado now so fashionable among many people—right, centre, and left, from *Punch* through the *Spectator* to the *New Statesman* —that encourages them to break a paper lance for English Liberty. In a world where the loss of liberty is only too real, too common, too painful, it strikes me as tasteless to mobilise all of one's moral indignation against various malpractices in the British Civil Service, or British trade unions, or British industry. True, these malpractices are reprehensible and should be fought against—but does anyone genuinely believe that they constitute a "new despotism"? It does not seem to me that England today is any the less free than it was twenty or thirty years ago—if anything, I have the contrary impression. The complex machinery of the modern state can be irritating and frustrating—but are we not too quick to forget what more serious irritations and frustrations this "managerial" society has liberated us from? Nor do I think for a moment that the industrial labourer of today feels any the more servile for working in a big factory or belonging to a big union—he never had any notable democratic privileges in smaller factories or smaller unions, and being more sensible than doctrinaire, he never looked to discover them there. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever defined a democratic society as one in which *all* institutions are democratically run.

Nevertheless, after all exceptions have been taken, one is pleased that this brochure was written, and that it was Mr. Crossman who wrote it. Preachers of righteousness are always in season, and it is always conceivable that the sin will catch up with the sermon. It is especially gratifying to have this sermon on liberty come from the left, where the traditional libertarian fervour has undergone some very odd metamorphoses in recent years. Indeed, though—as I have already indicated—Mr. Crossman's general line of argument is slanted against the right wing of the Labour Party (and against the Tories, too, it goes without saying), yet there are some points where he unmistakably shows a willingness to tilt in other directions as well. One feels certain that, come what may, Mr. Crossman's permanent revolution will go on, and that British politics will be the less boring because of it.

Irving Kristol

A MIND AT LARGE

THERE are two kinds of essay: the essay of ideas, in the tradition of Hazlitt, and the whimsical essay, in the tradition of Charles Lamb. Mr. Aldous Huxley is still supreme in the first tradition, as Sir Max Beerbohm in the second. Mr. Huxley has a few constant themes and there is the great interest of following his development of them through so many years. One of them is an inherited theme, almost a family possession, the relation of religion and science. *The Doors of Perception* opened a new phase, and this essay* is a continuation.

The old 19th century problem, the relation of religious experiences to natural causes, has been given a new twist by the calculated use of drugs to produce mystical experiences, or

* *Heaven and Hell.* By ALDOUS HUXLEY. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.

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rather, to produce states of mind which seem indistinguishable from the states described by mystics. The qualification is important, because the real question would be begged if we simply assumed that these special states of consciousness, induced by drugs, are properly to be called mystical experiences, or that they are actually indistinguishable from them. A man who claims to have had some mystical experience asserts not merely that he had a peculiar and recognisable set of feelings, and that the world suddenly looked altogether different to him in a characteristic way. He also claims that his experience was in some way connected with a supernatural order, either as an effect of the supernatural order upon him or as a reflection of it or both. One might at different times enjoy special states of consciousness which, subjectively viewed, seemed at the time exactly alike. But, taking into account the circumstances of them and their continuing effects, one might wish to claim that one of them had some supernatural significance, while the other was to be connected only with natural causes. Only the experience in its context is significant and never the experience by itself; and the context includes the object towards which it is directed and which we sincerely believe to be its cause.

Anyone who allows the possibility of a supernatural order at all must already have asked himself how supernatural and natural causes can meet and combine on some single occasion. As this has always been the first obstacle to religious belief, the fact that drugs may produce "mystical" experiences adds nothing new in principle. From the standpoint of most believers, the nature of the experience, whether it has any religious significance or not, is to be judged on each occasion by its effect upon the man's attitude to life, by the unnatural insight which he seems subsequently to derive from it and by other moral signs of this kind. The sceptic, who in any case finds the idea of a supernatural order senseless, only finds that, with these drugs, he has been offered one more natural explanation of the phenomena of religious experience. The two standpoints each have their own logic and consistency, and it is difficult to find common ground on which a decision between them could ever be forced; for anything which the believer takes as the test of the genuineness of a religious experience can be taken by the unbeliever as one more effect in the chain of natural causes.

One has to decide in advance, on philosophical grounds alone, whether any experience could ever point to anything which stands outside the order of experience itself.

MR. HUXLEY does not enter again into this old argument. He is more interested in the implications of the mescalin experiments in the philosophy of mind. He follows a hypothesis of Mind at Large, which lives in an Other World, a world which is discontinuous with the world of ordinary consciousness. The magical enchantments of the various arts, and the more simple magic of precious stones, of the effects of light and fire in pageantry, are to be traced to the natural, submerged experience of this Other World. He is most ingenious in finding analogies and correspondences in literature and the arts which show the same magical motifs recurring as in religious celebration; and these motifs appear in their crudest form when we are under the influence of drugs and in certain abnormal physical states. And, for Mr. Huxley, the more of this controlled and calculated magic, the better, because he finds the medium world of ordinary consciousness insignificant and confining; the world only illuminated in moments of heightened awareness. He has a religious disdain of unredeemed fact, and at the same time a critical and scientific temperament. He therefore finds entire satisfaction in this new form of illuminism, controlled and inquisitive, which allows him to see reality being transformed in his own consciousness without his making any commitments or assertions. Nothing contrary to reason has been admitted, but the boredom of reason is evaded. The wonders of science now enable one to remain for long periods below the surface in an aqualung and to return to the surface whenever one chooses; there is no need to be drowned in unreason in order to know what life below the surface of consciousness is like.

This may suggest some dilettantism in his argument; one may be reminded of that craze for the occult in scientific disguise, which was the refuge of 18th century rationalists, finding in Cagliostro, Mesmer, and in the mysteries of electricity and phre-

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nology, some relief from Newton's mechanical universe. But the suggestion is really unfair; for Mr. Huxley now draws from his experiences and analogies some general reflections on the nature of man which are the real point of his essay. He wishes his hypothesis of Mind at Large to be taken seriously. But there are philosophical objections to it. Why should we begin by assuming some absolute separation between modifications of the mind and modifications of the body, and thereby create a mystery for ourselves, the mystery of how intellect, interest, and understanding can be linked with conditions of body? Once this assumption of a separation is made, and the mystery thereby invented, we are driven to meet it with untestable hypotheses about the Mind at Large and of drugs opening the doors to this Mind. But it will surely be more faithful to the facts, and more economical, to admit that the action of these drugs is simply an extreme case of that breakdown of the more strict dualisms of mind and body, a breakdown which is now being recognised everywhere. A personality cannot be cut down the middle into two halves, and a man's whole manner of being, his perceptions and his interests, may be indifferently changed either by a disappointment or by a drug; this seems to be a fact, and there is no reason to resist the facts or to look for new kinds of invisible Mind to explain them.

That the intimacy of the link between a modification of the mind and a modification of the body allows only a distinction of convenience between them in the life of any one man, this is a doctrine at least as old as Spinoza. Mr. Huxley's analogies call for some more serious scheme of thought, and, for instance, ask to be related to the heavy work on German phenomenologists on human personality. His philosophising in a void cannot lead very far. As he passes quickly and lightly across the surface of speculation, he brings together quotations and analogies which are always interesting in themselves; the essay is never dull. But he somehow leaves the impression that he is looking for playthings and distractions rather than any plain and literal truth; and this, I think, is because he finds the ordinary world stale and therefore goes outside it in his imagination to find any amusement he can. But everything that he describes, or alludes to, has happened to men, or has been invented by men, who live in the ordinary world, objects among other objects.

Stuart Hampshire

OPENING UP

It is close on a hundred years since Japan was, in the somewhat farcical phrase, "opened up." But in what sense opened? To trade, certainly; but her culture remains practically unknown.

This may appear a surprising observation, coming from a part of the world which, fifty years ago if less so now, hung Japanese prints on its walls, sipped its tea from third-rate Japanese china, and dressed its wives in kimonos. Yet plainly these things were just the froth off the bowl; we should dubiously regard that Japanese who announced to us, "English culture? But I know all about it, my dear fellow: I have a Burne-Jones reproduction and a Hepplewhite sofa and a pair of plus-fours." We should feel that he had not exhausted his subject. Yet of Japanese architecture the ordinary "cultured" man knows little or nothing; of Japanese music, absolutely nothing; of Japanese prints and paintings outside of Hokusai and Hiroshigo, at most a smattering; of Japanese literature, possibly Mr. Waley's *Genji* and Mr. Pound's *No*, and beyond that nothing. And it is noticeable that what little acquaintance he has is practically without exception confined to the culture of Old Japan, of Japan as it was before the arrival of the American gunboats; of events, artistic and otherwise, in the century succeeding the "opening up," he remains almost ignorant. It is, I think, a sad and curious thing. Ignorance of Japanese culture is not at all the same thing as ignorance of say Nigerian or Indo-Chinese culture: for Japan is and was also a "civilisation," in the old-fashioned and more accurate sense of that term. The imposition of Western technics and values upon comparatively "primitive" societies is (though a process of absorbing interest) one thing: the struggle to come to terms between alien civilisations in certain

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ways no less polished than each other, is another. Japan, as a non-European civilisation in the (shall we say?) drawing-roomy sense, seems to me to stand supreme: India and China possessed great cultures perhaps comparable to European *medieval* society, but only Japan was Capability Brown-ish, Versailles-y, *fin-de-siècle*.

To some extent the post-war begins to remedy this condition. The first Japanese films were so many Chapman's Homers: and to the reading public Mr. Junichiro Tanizaki's *Some Prefer Nettles** should be a revelation of the same sort. Every step seems in virgin territory here, the flora is unfamiliar, the streams run new colours and sing in novel tunes. Perhaps I can illustrate this best by considering a single aspect of this strangeness.

There is nothing *outré* or Mikado-ish about the plot of *Some Prefer Nettles*. The hero, Kaname, a rich youngish *fainéant* Tokyo merchant, spends most of the book wondering whether and, if so, how to divorce his wife. They feel for each other mutual affection but mutual sexual boredom. She is Westernised, "emancipated"; he has been so but finds himself turning again in middle-age to the Japan of his fathers, the puppet-theatre and the *semisen*, as represented by his old-fashioned father-in-law with his doll-like geisha-mistress O-hisa. Kaname's problem therefore is at once a cultural and a personal one; the end of the book, most delicate and allusive, shows him beginning to formulate some solution to it, though we are not told its exact nature.

Now if this were a European novel this situation could only be discussed in terms of some moral system, probably a specifically Christian one; or in terms of rebellion against such a system. But in *Some Prefer Nettles* the problems are considered purely on their own merits without reference to ethics, philosophy, or hopes of heaven. "How shall I act," says Kaname in effect, "so as to hurt myself and others least?" Thus he considers whether divorces are liable to be more painful in autumn or in spring, in phase with nature's own season of parting, or out. Or the author tells us:

> There had been none of this hesitating when Takanatsu [Kaname's cousin and confidant] himself had left his wife. After he made up his mind he simply called her into the room one morning and informed her, and spent the rest of the day explaining his reasons. And when it was settled, they lay in each other's arms all night, the final parting before them—"She cried, and I cried—I wailed, too," Takanatsu told Kaname later.

This seems to me a mature book in a way that few European novels are—the sort of maturity no doubt that excludes its possessors from Christian heavens; but it is tremendously admirable to refuse to degrade the subtlety and seriousness of human relations by subjecting them to rule of religious thumb.

Quite apart from its novelty, *Some Prefer Nettles* is as nearly certainly a masterpiece in its own right as can be. Junichiro Tanazaki is, so to speak, the E. M. Forster of Japan (*Some Prefer Nettles* first appeared in 1928), with all that that implies of authority, sensibility, and style. Two of his precepts (quoted in the translator's preface) indicate his artistic aims: "If Japanese is vague, its vagueness must be made a virtue of"; "Do not be too clear, leave some gaps in the meaning." Mr. Seidensticker's translation is masterly. I recommend this book unreservedly.

TO TURN from Mr. Tanizaki to *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories** is to step into a nursery of godly worldly children. Japan and England have at least their differences in common; but what has either to say to this peasant world of religious simpletons and ghetto wits? There is nothing here of polish, refinement, civilised *finesse*; only little philosophical tailors, sly yokels, poor pelting villages lost in the Polish marshes. There is "warmth" and "humanity," as indeed there would need to be where the winters are bitter and the walls thin; the cheerful reek of the utterly poor huddled together over a little charcoal to gossip or bandy Talmudic verses without even packing-cases to grace their haunches. This is a collection of Yiddish tales in the full linguistic sense—there is nothing here that is not translated from that language; and it is thoroughly inclusive: every Yiddish writer of any account is represented, and there are nearly a hundred

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* *Some Prefer Nettles*. By JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI. Secker and Warburg. 12s. 6d.

* *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*. Edited by IRVING HOWE and ELIEZER GREENBERG. André Deutsch. 25s.

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pages of introduction and biographical notices. It is indeed an indispensable handbook for the amateur. As is to be expected, it is also pretty heterogeneous as to quality, writers of real literary merit jostling those whose importance is merely historical, or whose services to Jewry may be thought to outclass their services to literature. Nevertheless a good half of these 600 pages provide excellent reading: apart from the generous selections from the "grand old men," Mendele, Sholom Aleichem, and Peretz, I was most struck by two wonderful stories by Mr. Bashevis Singer—*Gimpel the Fool* is perhaps the finest treatment of "holy idiocy" to be found outside the pages of Dostoyevsky. At the end is a short section of traditional material. This is rather slap-happily put together: it is worse than useless to attempt to represent the Hasidic stories (probably the world's subtlest folk-tales) by a single indifferent example.

The Queen's Knight,* by Mr. Marvin Borowsky, is described as a "historical novel about King Arthur, his knights, and the people over whom he ruled"; and the author claims, "Within the medieval period, the detail is accurate. But do not try to pin it to a precise date. The time is neither in the reign of this Edward nor of that Richard—it is fictitious." Neither of these statements is felicitous. One cannot write "historical novels" about pseudo-historical persons; and to parody the second claim is to demonstrate its absurdity—"Within the post-Renaissance period, the detail is accurate. . . . The time is neither in the reign of Queen Anne nor of Queen Victoria." Author and blurb-writer are in fact doing *The Queen's Knight* less than justice: it is a historical *fantasy*, based very slenderly upon Malory and his predecessors—with a 5th century political set-up from Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-history; 12th–16th century clothing and architecture from, say, Coulton's *Mediaeval Panorama*; and social ideals from William Morris. Mr. Borowsky treats his Malorian precedents with scant respect; he preserves the rough outlines of the Arthur-Mordred-Guinevere-Launcelot story, but knocks it about just as he feels inclined. This seems to me a very proper attitude: "Kyng Arthoure is nat dede," and he can bear any amount of re-handling and re-interpreting. Mr. Borowsky concentrates on politics, strategy, the anatomy of counter-revolution. *The Queen's Knight* is tremendously exciting: of course very much is lost, the dignity, the beauty, the magical overtones. If we compare the two "last partings" of Launcelot and Guinevere, we see how much:

> Mr. Borowsky: She ran to the comfort of his arms. Some time after, when her sobs no longer racked her, she moved back from him. They stood looking at each other a moment. Then she took his head between her hands, rose on her tiptoes and kissed his lips good-bye.

> Malory: "For I take recorde of God, in you I have had myn erthly joye, and yf I had founden you now so dysposed, I had cast me to have had you into myn owne royame. But sythen I fynde you thus desposed, I ensure you faythfully, I wyl even take me to penance. . . . Wherefore, madame, I praye you kysse me, and never no more." "Nay," sayd the quene, "that shal I never do, but absteyne you from such werkes."

Mr. Roger Longrigg's *A High-Pitched Buzz** is the latest recruit to the rapidly-swelling ranks of the "contemporary novel"—which is contemporary in just the same sense as a "contemporary lampshade" or a "contemporary wallpaper," no more, no less. It is photographically faithful to the Expressionism of the Expresso and the shore-life of the Chel-sea, and conscientiously satirical about both. This is the sort of ingratiating and readable book that is usually hailed as a "brilliantly promising first novel"; I should describe it myself as a somewhat facile piece of achievement by a young man with a sharp eye for the state of the market. That doesn't make it any the less enjoyable.

Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell has sometimes seemed to me a modern incarnation of Dr. Syntax, of whom it will be recalled

> He prosed it here, and versed it there,
> And picturesqued it everywhere.

In the present very generous selection of his descriptive prose,† this most ornamented

* *The Queen's Knight*. By Marvin Borowsky. Chatto and Windus. 15s.

* *A High-Pitched Buzz*. By Roger Longrigg. Faber and Faber. 12s. 6d.

† *Selected Works of Sacheverell Sitwell*. Robert Hale. 24s.

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and iridescent of stylists piles the marvellous upon the marvellous to dazzle and deafen the reader: the exhibits vary from Brueghel's Dulle Griet and a hurdy-gurdy virtuoso to an evocation of an Irish monastery and the most brilliant short appreciation of Bach's Organ-fugues ever written. These pieces are gathered together from a variety of separate works always rather expensive and now no longer obtainable. My own favourite amongst them is the "Dramas and Dance Cycles of the Islands," a long prose-poem (in the proper sense of that abused term) about Oceania: there is no better arm-chair escape-holiday than a plunge into this sea, with its

> fishes that are the macaws of the coral grove, but in greater variety; that bask or glide, or flaunt their parrot skins; or are singular in shape as well as colour; monstrous and creeping, or shooting like Xiphias through the divine. . . .

Hilary Corke

THE HUMAN PHENOMENON

FROM the moment of my first meeting with Père Teilhard in 1946, soon after I had gone to Paris as head of UNESCO, I realised that I had found not only a friend, but a partner in intellectual and spiritual adventure. Though he had approached the problem of human destiny from the standpoint of a Christian and a Jesuit Father, and I from that of an agnostic and zoologist, we had been thinking along the same lines and had come to astonishingly similar conclusions. This was because we had both been determined to look at human destiny (that is to say man, his cosmic background and home, and the relation between them) as a phenomenon — from as many sides as possible, but only and always as phenomenon, not as a metaphysical, an ethical, or theological problem. In such an approach, man is seen not as a creation alien or separate from nature, but as a part (and a very essential part) of the phenomenon of evolution. And mind and spirit appear not as an irrelevant epiphenomena nor as a supernatural injection, but as highly important natural phenomena.

The view of nature and man inevitably derived from this approach, and the sweeping conclusions which Père Teilhard's lucid and fearless mind drew from it, met with disfavour among some of his ecclesiastical superiors, and for a time he was forbidden to publish them in print (though he was still free to circulate some of his minor writings in mimeographed form). But last year he died: and a number of his friends, disciples, and admirers set up two committees, scientific and general, to arrange for the publication of the present work, which had lain under the ban for seven years. The committees included such notable and influential people—the Abbé Breuil, Prince Louis de Broglie, Miss Dorothy Garrod, Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark, Dr. Theodore Monod, Professor G. G. Simpson, and Arnold Toynbee in the former, and Robert Aron, Georges Duhamel, André Malraux, Roland de Margerie, and André Siegfried in the latter—that they soon achieved their aim. This posthumous publication of a once-prohibited work* is itself a significant human phenomenon.

THE force and purity of Père Teilhard's thought and expression, in fruitful combination with his capacity for loving comprehension of all values, has given the world a picture not only of rare clarity but pregnant with compelling conclusions.

The first phenomenon to be noted and stressed is unity. The cosmos, with all its gigantic dimensions of space and time, is one — a single process of evolution. And what evolves is also unitary, the single world-stuff which possesses both material and mental properties in necessary combination.

The second is direction: the process slowly generates novelty, variety, and higher levels of organisation, and does so irreversibly. A specially significant aspect of this directedness is the tendency for mental properties to become more manifest absolutely, and more important relatively to material properties. (Père Teilhard in one place speaks of Matter and Spirit as "conjugate variables," whose mutual relations and quantitative development could be, theoretically at least, expressed in an evolutionary graph.)

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* *Le Phenomène Humain*. By PÈRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN. Editions du Seuil. Paris. 780 francs.

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The third is the existence of critical points in the evolutionary process, points at which new properties of the world-stuff emerge, new mechanisms of change begin to operate, new types of organisation to appear. So far, there have been two such critical points—the origin of life, or the point when matter became self-reproducing, and the origin of conscious reflexion in man, when we may say that mind became self-reproducing, and cultural was superposed on biological evolution. Restricting himself to the earth as the only portion of the cosmos where we have firm knowledge of these critical points, we can distinguish three successive envelopes or spheres —first the Geosphere, scene of inorganic transformations, on which, some two billion years ago, was superposed the Biosphere, the evolving system of organic life, and some few hundred thousand years ago the Noosphere, the evolving system of human thought and awareness, and its products.

The fourth phenomenon is that of evolutionary restriction. During organic evolution, group after group exhausts its evolutionary possibilities and reaches a plateau, leaving progress to fewer and fewer of the lines of life. Since the late Pliocene, only one line remains which is capable of further major advance—Man. During the last few million years the phenomenon of evolutionary progress has been concentrated in the human phenomenon.

NEXT is the radical novelty of the form of the evolutionary process in its human phase. During the prehuman organic phase, each new successful type splits up: it diverges or differentiates into an array of subtypes, each of them terminating in a large number of the biologically insulated lines of life we call species. But with man it is different. After a brief period of incipient differentiation (leading to the major human races or subspecies), divergence is replaced by convergence, first of the biological units or separate races of man, and later of his psychosocial units or cultural entities. Thus man, though a major and dominant evolutionary type, consists of but a single biological species, and within a few centuries, or at most a few millennia, is destined to form but one cultural unit, supported by a single framework of general ideas and beliefs.

This leads on to the fifth point—that man's evolution, being primarily cultural, depends mainly on his knowledge about the world and himself. Knowledge is the basis of true vision; vision establishes attitude; and attitude determines and directs action. And, since the scientific method (in the extended sense of establishing and organising knowledge by hypothesis checked against experience or experiment) has proved the most effective and the only permanently fruitful method of increasing our knowledge and our comprehension, the extension of scientific method on an increasing scale to an increased range of study appears as the prerequisite of progress.

This of course does not deny the importance of creative expression, in literature and the arts, in ritual and celebration, in religious affirmation. Creative expression is essential as the means of interpreting knowledge and experience so that they become immediately effective in life. Nor does it deny the importance of practical craft, technology, and industry: they are essential as the means of applying knowledge and experience so that they become immediately useful. But the increase of knowledge is in the long run the only begetter of desirable human advance, and scientific method is its indispensable basis.

Finally, there is the phenomenon of scale. The scale on which the evolutionary process operates is gigantic, both for space and still more significantly for time. Until we get used to this extended time-scale, we cannot effectively visualise the movements and changes of evolution in any of its spheres. The enormous improbabilities actualised in higher animals and man can only be grasped or evaluated in terms of hundreds of millions of years of the earth's past history; and the equally enormous possibilities that might still be actualised on earth can only be envisaged in terms of the hundreds of millions of years that lie ahead. Only when men grasp that Man is in his evolutionary infancy can they interiorise this vision of his possibilities, and only by so interiorising the future can Man hope to realise it in its possible plenitude.

It is, I think, of interest to mention that all these points had also been stressed by me quite independently (I first formulated the idea of a critical point between biological and human evolution in 1914); it is of interest as showing how two thinkers, one as

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a paleontologist starting from Christian premises, the other a general biologist starting from rationalist premises, are almost bound to pick out the same phenomena as significant and to draw the same general conclusions from the facts—provided they both approach the problem in the same spirit of open-minded naturalism.

OF COURSE Père Teilhard's formulations of his views often differed from mine in detail, and he often saw further and with keener vision that I ever did. I think of his brilliant conception of what he called *enroulement* leading to an intenser psychism. By *enroulement* he meant the infolding of a portion of the world-stuff on itself, to form an organised unit, held together by its own tensions and in certain ways a closed and self-equilibrated system. Atoms, molecules, cells, multicellular individuals, and human personalities are all examples of such systems, all products of *enroulement*, but each on a different organisational level. Furthermore he postulates that the more complex the system and the more closely-knit its organisation, the more active and significant will be its interior life, its degrees and modes of awareness.

He envisages the tendency to cultural convergence already manifested in human history as inevitably leading to an *enroulement* of the entire Noosphere—and so generating a unitary system of thought and belief, or as he might have preferred to say, a single thinking and believing whole. This, being of extreme complexity, will be at an extremely high psychological potential; during its formation, explosive psycho-social forces will doubtless be released, but once organised, it will inevitably generate immense dynamism for man's future evolution. And he further illuminates the whole subject by treating this future state as the necessary culmination of what he brilliantly terms *hominisation*—the process by which man becomes more truly and more fully human.

Père Teilhard's treatment of the mechanism of biological evolution is rather inadequate, and his attempt to link his evolutionary philosophy with Christian theology perhaps a trifle forced. But these are minor defects. The book as a whole is outstanding. "Where there is no vision, the people perish," said the author of Proverbs: *le Phenomène Humain* gives us a new and vivifying vision of the process of reality. Pilate asked "what is truth?" Jesus had already answered the question: The truth is that which shall set you free. Because Père Teilhard's is a true vision, it not only vivifies but liberates: it sets the troubled mind and soul free of many dreadful perplexities.

Julian Huxley

VERY WELL

IT IS probable that more books of new verse have been published in English during the first half of the 20th century than in the whole of the 18th and 19th put together. But as a believer in the applicability of Gresham's Law to poetry, I have never found that reflection particularly cheering when confronted with the second rank of contemporary verse. For just as it is not the money that is obviously and egregiously bad which is most damnably dangerous, but that which best counterfeits the genuine article, so with poetry. And there is an uncompromising statement by William Wordsworth about one of his own poems which might be better attended to. "If it is not more than very well, it is very bad, there is no intermediate stage."

In the books of verse before me* I can detect all sorts of virtues which seem beside the point, because they are not poetic virtues, and I presume I have been asked to review

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* *Poems.* By ROBERT CONQUEST. Macmillan. 10s. 6d.

Friday's Child. By WILFRED WATSON. Faber and Faber. 9s. 6d.

Patmos, and other poems. By ROBIN SKELTON. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 10s. 6d.

A Way of Looking. By ELIZABETH JENNINGS. André Deutsch. 8s. 6d.

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poetry. Good writing; sensitivity; a talent for description; religious feeling; some wit; an ear for cadence, dissonance; fancy; logic; good taste; educated intelligence; intellectual doubt; involvement with contemporary problems; urbanity; technical ability; etc. etc.—they're all here, more or less. Yet I feel as if I'd been drinking too much non-alcoholic cider—or reading novels. John Milton said poetry was simple, sensuous, and passionate. Here I find a good deal of simple-mindedness, but not much simplicity; a lot of flagellation of experience, but not much passion; plenty of sensitivity, some sensuality, but little sensuousness. If what follows appears to be unnecessarily castigatory,—and as all but one of the volumes under review is a first book, I do feel a monster—I hope the reader will remember the sentence of Wordsworth's quoted above, and understand that I am not being critical of mere writing, but of the poetry that has been delivered to my fallible and I hope passionate judgment.

"WHAT can a poem do with a landscape?" asks Mr. Robert Conquest, who is not a negligible writer. (In parenthesis, in most of these books I keep on coming across sad and reverent asides about "Art," "the Poem," and "Poetry," which somehow remind me of an agnostic's respectful doffing of the hat as he enters a church to examine the friezes on the west wall.) "The poetry," Mr. Conquest goes on to explain, "sees a giant static set-piece." Indeed, Mr. Conquest's book of static set-pieces begins with an example of the sort of thing I suppose he means. It is called "Nantucket," and I quote it in prose, which is a dirty trick I admit, but then why did Mr. Conquest chop up the commentary from a travelogue film into lengths and present it as a poem—and the opening poem of his book at that?

It lay in the mist or wind. Perhaps Karlsefni saw it to starboard on the voyage from Hóp to Straumfjord. Fishermen, farmers and theologians settled the swept bay and crescent bluffs. And then its attention was filled with whales. A blunt, chipped sickle: it reaped the sea. Oh, that was an astonishing empire! All the ocean gave up to its hunters dangerous and profitable monsters. Folgers and Husseys, Starbucks and Coffins, branded the salt wrath with their keels and spears. Melville chose them, the boldest men on earth, to be his champions on the demon seas of his heart. Even they succumbed. Ahab died. The waters washed the ruined survivor to another coast. The whaling went elsewhere, to techniques and guns. And the island lies in its parish, weather, and past.

Only one image—that of the sickle-shaped island reaping the sea—to an intolerable deal of information and prose!

It is not because Mr. Conquest is so terribly bad that I plant these banderillos. On the contrary, it is because he is a particularly brilliant and gifted exponent of the exact, urbane, cultured group of Leica snapshotters—which includes such excellent writers and indifferent poets as Lawrence Durrell, Alan Ross, and Bernard Spencer—whose habit is to present the public with photograph albums instead of poems. And, really, the answer to the question "What can a poem do with a landscape?" is, "Abandon it to the travel-brochures," or to do what Wordsworth did, and that is to use it for a backdrop in front of which human figures, emotions, affairs, and passions, may effectively move. One doesn't go to a theatre simply to look at the scenery.

Counterbalancing Mr. Conquest's type of writer, there are Chagall paint-sloshers who dip their pens in dylanite and stick archangels in the hair. To this class I assign Messrs. Skelton and Watson: regretfully, because while they write less well than Mr. Conquest, I personally feel more sympathetic to the dionysiac approach to the thing we're all bothering about—the writing of poetry. Occasionally they achieve a fine line (e.g. Mr. Skelton, who can see

within the orchard's apple-blow the Tree)

and even entire stanzas. But I get worried about the ear that can approve a line like

and held our hands to what was smally heaving

and suspect that a sense of humour might have balked at:

and grow to be a feel, a think

though it is of course perfectly unfair to pick out the worst lines from a young man's first book. Both Mr. Watson and Mr. Skelton, unlike Mr. Conquest, show clear traces of other poets—Yeats, Hopkins, and Dylan Thomas in the case of the former, Wallace Stevens, bits of Eliot, Vernon Watkins, and Sidney Keyes in the valise of the latter. There

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is nothing wrong, there is much commendable, in young writers imitating those whom they love: it is only bad when they imitate those whom they feel they ought to love. But Mr. Watson seems rather swamped by his adoration of Dylan Thomas:

> Then nor
> Any day nor
> Any moment neither
> But now—ever and ever
> It was, and the Garden of Eden was
> The day before . . .

Yet his book does have a number of pieces, for example "The Juniper Tree," where he attempts a ballad style far enough removed from Yeats's to be really interesting.

THE name of Miss Elizabeth Jennings has been mentioned in connection with the current "movement," the "University Wits," whose phalanxes recently took over a space vacated by repatriates from the Middle East, who in turn inherited it from the half-forgotten apocalyptics of the early forties, who in turn—but why go on? The new lodgers, at any rate, are singular in that they derive their renown from novels rather than verse—but let that pass. Like the other ticket-holders, Miss Jennings probably doesn't consider herself a member of the "movement"; and, where her virtues are concerned, I certainly agree. For, on the evidence of her new book of poems, she is doing her utmost to be truly honest with herself, instead of being *apparently* honest, which is, I think, the sin that vitiates the Empsonian gum-shoeing of Dr. Leavis's teddy-boys. Certainly she states their case and their particular problem better than any of them:

> Something is deeply held
> By me who never deeply searched at all
> And we are not yet wise enough or subtle
> To offer anyone a state of mind.

and

> Feelings are forced that are not used
> Upon their own occasion and,
> Close to a tragedy, at most
> We only move it through the mind . . .
>
> Perhaps the deeper tragedy
> Is then the inability
> To change a thought into emotion . . .

Those last three lines seem to me to be one of the most significant statements made by, for, and about the post-Bomb generation.

Where, on the other hand, Miss Jennings's failings are evident, they turn out to be common property of the new academics—unassimilated lumps of O.K. poets such as Edwin Muir (cf. the poem beginning, in the pure vein of Muir, "We did not know that we had come to search"), William Empson (cf. the villanelle beginning in the ditto of ditto, "I kept my answers small and kept them near") and Robert Graves—as in the poem called "Napoleon," of which I quote the first stanza:

> Many who spoke with him a little found
> Him most indulgent to the common voice
> And sensitive to quirks of character.
> I wonder, then, was this sent underground,
> This gift for understanding, when he chose
> All the impersonal power of emperor?

While the first three lines clearly belong to Mr. Graves, the next three seem to me to be the effect of fancy operating upon insufficient or irrelevant data, knowledge of people, instead, as one has the right to demand of a poem, that of imagination upon life and experience. (Can one conceive *Napoleon*, even as emperor, wielding *impersonal* power?) But to be fair, there are not many poems exhibiting this sort of naïve knowingness to be found in Miss Jennings's book. For her virtues, which include all-important ones for a poet—the struggle for honesty, a feeling for words, and technical achievement—she may easily be forgiven a certain amount of imprecision of emotion, disguised by precision of logic, which I find characteristic of the "movement." Where she scores is in those poems in which she is genuinely worried about herself, and doesn't pretend to know all the answers, or (which is worse) all the questions. And I think that hers is without much doubt easily the best of the books here under review.

David Wright

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